

THE GENESIS OF BOOKS

STUDIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

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VOLUME 9

THE GENESIS OF BOOKS
Studies in the Scribal Culture of Medieval England
in Honour of A. N. Doane

Edited by

Matthew T. Hussey and John D. Niles



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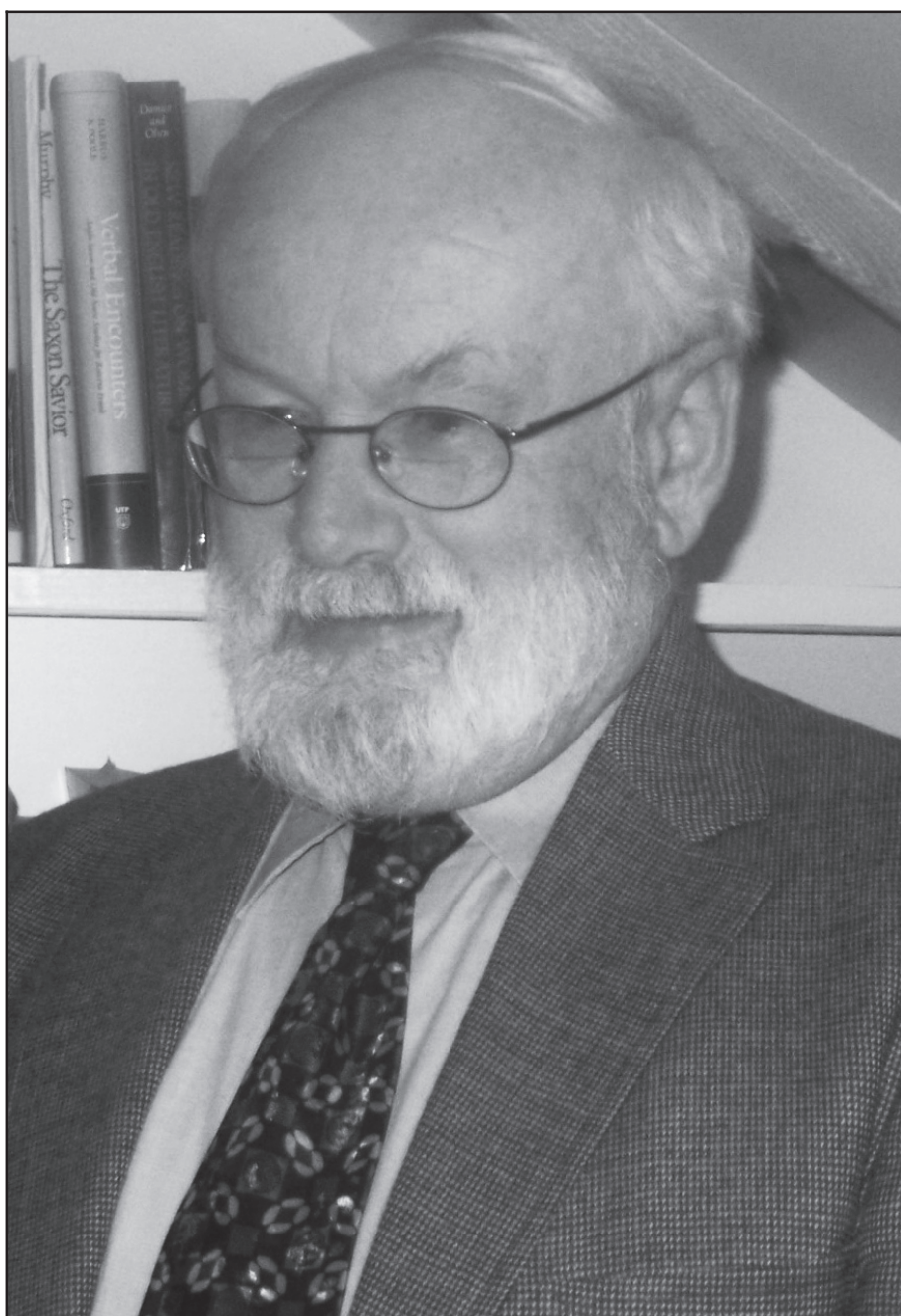
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A. N. Doane in his study. Photo courtesy of Marty Blalock.

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Several chapters included in the present volume represent fleshed-out versions of papers first presented in oral form at a special event, ‘Word, Text, and Print: A Conference in Honor of A. N. Doane’, that took place 7–8 May 2007, at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. We are grateful to all of Nick Doane’s friends who were able to attend that warmly collegial event, as well as to its financial sponsors, which included the UW – Madison Department of English, the Department of Art History, the Medieval Studies Program, the Lectures Committee, and the Anonymous Fund.

ABBREVIATIONS

A-S	Anglo-Saxon
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records
ASMMF	Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile
B-T	James Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller, <i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</i> (Oxford, 1898), with <i>Supplement</i> by T. N. Toller (1921) and <i>Revised and Enlarged Addenda</i> by A. Campbell (1972)
CCCC	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
CUL	Cambridge University Library
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford, 2004), on-line at < http://www.oxforddnb.com/ >
<i>DOE</i>	<i>Dictionary of Old English</i> , ed. by Antonette diPaolo Healey and others (Toronto, 1986–)
EEMF	Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile
EETS	Early English Text Society
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , ed. by Hans Kurath and others (Ann Arbor, 1954–2001)
OE	Old English

<i>OED</i>	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> , 2nd edn (Oxford, 1989)
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
s.n.	sine nomine

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PUBLICATIONS OF A. N. DOANE

I. Books and Editions

- 1978 *Genesis A: A New Edition* (Madison)
- 1991 *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon 'Genesis B' and the Old Saxon Vatican 'Genesis'* (Madison)
- Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. with Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison)
- 1992 *Old English and New: Studies in Language and Linguistics in Honor of Frederic G. Cassidy*, ed. with Joan H. Hall and Dick Ringler (New York)
- 2006 *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. with Kirsten Wolf (Tempe)
- 2011 *Purloined Letters: The Twelfth Century Annotations in the Old English Hexateuch (British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv)*, with William Stoneman (Tempe)
- Forthcoming: *Genesis A: A Revised New Edition* (Tempe)

II. Chapters, Articles, and Reviews

- 1966 'Heathen Form and Christian Function in *The Wife's Lament*', *Mediaeval Studies*, 28: 77–91
- Review of *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honour of Francis Peabody Magoun*, ed. by J. Bessinger and R. Creed (1965), *Journal*

- of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 25: 113–17
- 1973 “‘The Green Street of Paradise’: A Note on Lexis and Meaning in Old English Poetry’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 74: 456–65
- 1977 ‘Genesis B 317a: “Sumum heard gewrinc”’, *Philological Quarterly*, 56: 404–07
- 1978 ‘Legend, History and Artifice in *The Battle of Maldon*’, *Viator*, 9: 39–66
- 1979 ‘*Elene* 610a: “Rexgenidlan”’, *Philological Quarterly*, 58: 237–40
- ‘The Other Anglo-Saxons’, *Queen’s Quarterly*, 86: 302–13 (reviews of M. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (1978), P. Hunter Blair, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (1977), B. Raw, *The Art and Background of Old English Poetry* (1978), and C. Williamson, *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book* (1977))
- 1987 ‘Three Old English Implement Riddles: Reconsiderations of Numbers 4, 49, and 73’, *Modern Philology*, 84: 243–57
- 1989 ‘Towards a Poetics of Old Saxon: Intertextuality and the Sodom Episodes in Heliand and Genesis’, in *Medieval German Literature*, ed. by Albrecht Classen, *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik*, 507 (Göppingen), pp. 1–19
- 1989– ‘The Sources of *Genesis A* (Cameron A.1.1.1)’, in *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: A Register of Written Sources Used by Anglo-Saxon Authors*, <<http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>>
- 1991 ‘Oral Texts, Intertexts, and Intratexts: Editing Old English’, in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. by Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison), pp. 75–113
- 1993 ‘Interdialectics and Reading in *Genesis B*’, in *Of Pavlova, Poetry and Paradigms: Essays in Honour of Harry Orsman*, ed. by Laurie Bauer and Christine Franzen (Wellington), pp. 112–22
- 1994 ‘Editing Old English Oral/Written Texts: Problems of Method (with an Illustrative Edition of Charm 4, *Wið færstice*)’, in *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. by D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge), pp. 125–45

- ‘The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer’, *Oral Tradition*, 9: 420–39
- 1997 Review of R. Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (1995), *Envoi*, 6: 103–13
- 1998 ‘Genesis A and B’, ‘Literacy and Readership’, and ‘Orality and Auality’, in *Medieval England: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach, M. Teresa Tavorina, and Joel Rosenthal (New York), pp. 313–14, 425–28, and 562–64
- ‘Spacing, Placing and Effacing: Scribal Textuality and Exeter Riddle 30 a/b’, in *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer and Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Cambridge), pp. 45–65
- Review of P. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (1996), *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 97: 407–10
- Review of P. E. Dutton and H. L. Kessler, *The Poetry and Paintings of the First Bible of Charles the Bald* (1997), *Envoi*, 7: 133–46
- 2000 Review of *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. by P. Pulsiano and E. Treharne (1998), *Envoi*, 9: 56–78
- 2003 ‘Beowulf and Scribal Performance’, in *Unlocking the Wordhoard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. by Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Toronto), pp. 62–75
- 2004 ‘Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile’, *Old English Newsletter*, 38: 23–28
- 2006 Review of J. Cathey, *Héliand: Text and Commentary* (2002), *Envoi*, 10: 103–07
- ‘The Werden Glossary: Structure and Sources’, in *Beatus Vir*, ed. by Doane and Wolf, pp. 41–84
- 2007 Review of *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, ed. by A. Harbus and R. Poole (2005), *Envoi* 11: 150–70
- 2008 Review of S. Suzuki, *The Metre of Old Saxon Poetry: The Remaking of the Alliterative Tradition* (2004), *Speculum* 83: 483–85

- Review of Benjamin C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B. iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (2007), *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 108: 395–99
- 2010 Review of *Form and Content of Instruction in Anglo-Saxon England in the Light of Contemporary Manuscript Evidence*, ed. by Patrizia Lendinara, Loredana Lazzari, and Maria Amalia D’Aronco, Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 39 (2007), *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109: 111–14
- ‘The Transmission of Genesis B’, in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. by Hans Sauer, Joanna Story, and Gaby Waxenberger, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Tempe), pp. 63–82

III. Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile (ASMMF)

Founding editors Phillip Pulsiano and A. N. Doane; general editor A. N. Doane. Twenty volumes are now in print or immediately pending, out of a set of a projected forty volumes being published by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona, in its Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies series.

1. *Books of Prayers and Healing*, descriptions by A. N. Doane, 1994
2. *Psalters I*, descriptions by Phillip Pulsiano, 1994
3. *Anglo-Saxon Gospels*, descriptions by R. M. Liuzza and A. N. Doane, 1995
4. *Glossed Texts, Aldhelmiana, Psalms*, descriptions by Phillip Pulsiano, 1996
5. *Latin Manuscripts with Anglo-Saxon Glosses*, descriptions by Peter J. Lucas, A. N. Doane, and I. Cunningham, 1997
6. *Worcester Manuscripts*, descriptions by Christine Franzen, 1998
7. *Anglo-Saxon Bibles and ‘The Book of Cerne’*, descriptions by A. N. Doane, 2002
8. *Wulfstan Texts and Other Homiletic Materials*, descriptions by Jonathan Wilcox, 2000
9. *Deluxe and Illuminated Manuscripts Containing Technical and Literary Texts*, descriptions by A. N. Doane and Tiffany J. Grade, 2001
10. *Manuscripts Containing the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Works by Bede, and Other Texts*, descriptions by Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe, 2003
11. *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge I: MSS 41, 57, 191, 302, 303, 367, 383, 422*, descriptions by Timothy Graham, Raymond J. S. Grant, Peter J. Lucas, and Elaine M. Treharne, 2003

12. *Manuscripts of Trinity College, Cambridge*, descriptions by Michael Wright and Stephanie Hollis, 2004
 13. *Manuscripts in the Low Countries*, descriptions by Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr, and Kees Dekker, 2006
 14. *Manuscripts of Durham, Ripon, and York*, descriptions by Sarah Larrett Keefer, David Rollason, and A. N. Doane, 2007
 15. *Grammars; Handlist of Manuscripts*, descriptions by A. N. Doane, 2007
 16. *Manuscripts Relating to Dunstan, Ælfric, and Wulfstan; the 'Eadwine Psalter' Group*, descriptions by Peter J. Lucas and Jonathan Wilcox, with A. N. Doane, Matthew T. Hussey, and Phillip Pulsiano, 2008
 17. *Homilies by Ælfric and Other Homilies*, descriptions by Jonathan Wilcox, 2008
 18. *Manuscripts in France* (publication pending)
 19. *Saints' Lives, Martyrologies, and Bilingual Rule of St. Benedict*, descriptions by A. N. Doane, 2010
 20. *Manuscripts in Switzerland*, descriptions by Joseph McGowan, 2011
- Interim Index (Volumes 1–10)*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Matthew T. Hussey, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Matthew T. Hussey and John D. Niles

This book is about the book itself as shaped and made by medieval scribes, as well as by parchmenters, illuminators, anthologizers, and (of course) authors. It is about books as conditioned by those makers' intentions, as well as by the whole set of cultural understandings that were present in the world where those books were made. Questions relating to such matters as the provenance, patronage, audience, compilation, script, function, use, and editing of medieval manuscripts are raised, and often those questions are resolved, even if tentatively, in a fresh manner that may on occasion surprise.

Much of the volume deals with books and texts produced in Anglo-Saxon England. England before the Conquest was not an island, however, whether one thinks of it in spatial terms or, with some metaphorical freedom, in terms of temporality. Britain is an island, but England was not and is not; nor can any period of time be thought of as an island, separated by seas (what seas?) from other eras. Some attention is therefore paid, in this book, to early medieval England as a cultural crossroads east and west, as well as to English manuscripts produced on the basis of Continental models. Likewise, any individual manuscript can be approached as a kind of temporal crossroads where words from the past have been carried forward into the future, in a process that, for the inhabitants of Britain, was only partly interrupted by the Norman Conquest. This book thus contributes to a reassessment of early English culture as complex, emergent, and multistranded rather than as something easily reduced to a sculpture-like form.

One point that is raised in the following chapters is that a manuscript page can be thought of as a kind of scribal performance. The surfaces of certain manuscripts are therefore scrutinized, in several chapters, with precise attention to the details of orthography, spacing, and punctuation. Likewise, the contents of certain manuscripts are analysed for signs of their possible use, whether within the scriptorium

or beyond it. Intersections of text and voice come in for special attention, as well, seeing that written texts were generally meant to be performed aloud so as to be heard by a group of listeners, while some texts, including certain sermons and charms, call out for vigorous oral performance in a context where words are articulated through gesture as well as voice.

Medieval manuscripts, it must be emphasized, are diverse and defy simple categorization. Partly for that reason, manuscripts of various types are examined here. Both prose and verse are taken into account, as are manuscripts that modulate between those two categories. Also taken into consideration are several different registers of verbal expression, whether falling 'high' on the socio-cultural spectrum (e.g. illustrated gospel books or psalters), in the 'medium' range (e.g. anonymous popular songs or sermons, or a personal letter written by a person of rank), or nearer the 'low' end of the scale (e.g. a charm with distinctive folkloric content). Of course, such hierarchical distinctions as these may have only limited application in the early medieval world, for one and the same textual community may have made use of psalms, sermons, charms, and any number of other texts, whether written in Latin or in the vernacular. In any event, this book addresses a number of different literary genres and types, ranging from clearly devotional materials (e.g. the whole contents of the Vercelli Book) to texts of a more worldly orientation (e.g. a sequence of items in the Exeter Book). It thus encourages consideration of the uses of medieval texts without regard to pointlessly restrictive boundaries.

This kind of comprehensive consideration has long been served by the disciplines of palaeography and codicology — modern keys that unlock old doors. This book turns an eye towards these tools, pragmatically reconsidering them in the light of specific evidence. In addition, since most modern readers know of medieval books only through the mediation of printed editions, attention is paid to the theory of editing. This in turn requires consideration of how forms of handwriting are evaluated and how a book's physical makeup is assessed. In this manner, this volume confirms that what can be learned from old books is conditioned by the tools used to study them.

While the volume showcases some beautiful codices written in the Latin language and illustrated in a European style that was not restricted to any one geographical area, the emphasis in most chapters falls on plain manuscripts made in England and written in English. In addition to the Vercelli Book and the Exeter Book, the Blickling Homilies and the *Lacnunga* manuscript come in for special attention, as does the Fonthill Letter. While English manuscript production during the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries is much too large a topic to be adequately addressed here, the story of how English literature developed

from its origins into the late Middle Ages can be made eloquently clear through manuscript studies. For this reason, some continuities in literary production and book-making are explored without regard to what is sometimes viewed as a 'great divide' between the Old English and Middle English periods. The production of psalters during the century after the Conquest falls under scrutiny, as does the historical development of the medieval English lyric, with its accompanying music. A concluding essay provides integrative comments on a number of individual Middle English manuscripts, including some out-of-the-way items as well as such famous ones as the Auchinleck manuscript and the Ellesmere Chaucer.

The book's emphasis on manuscripts written in the vernacular deserves comment. A fact well known to Anglo-Saxonists, though sometimes ignored by specialists in other fields, is that a remarkably large and varied body of literature was recorded in the English language, the idiom of the people, during the period before the Conquest. This literature does not always simply mirror the Latin literature of its day, for it has a distinctive character and special traits. The same is true of the literature of England during the later Middle Ages, as is well known and rightly celebrated. Particularly since many of these books present unique combinations of Latin and vernacular materials, this whole corpus of scribal writings has much to reveal about the complex, polyphonic interrelations of language and culture during the English Middle Ages.

The present volume thus contributes to a large body of recent scholarship that engages with the material basis of medieval studies. While sage medievalists have never neglected study of the manuscripts that are the basis of most of what is known about this era of the past, there was a time, around the mid-twentieth century, when other aspects of medieval studies tended to be prioritized in the academy, sometimes with élan. The New Criticism, with its numerous adherents, stimulated close attention to the form, style, tone, and texture of literary works, though with results that have at times seemed precious, as one poet who was also an outstanding literary scholar suggested at that time through a mock epitaph:

Here lies New Critic who would fox us
With his poetic paradoxes.
Though he lies here rigid and quiet
If he could speak he would deny it.¹

Structuralism, psychoanalytic criticism, and myth criticism all were pursued, sometimes in triple tandem with one another. In the 1980s and 1990s, postmodern and

¹ J. V. Cunningham, *Collected Poems and Epigrams* (London, 1971), p. 120. The poem dates from 1959.

New Historical theoretical models did much to transform medieval studies as a discipline, as happened in so many other fields. Over the past two decades, partly in reaction against the sublimation of texts that is sometimes involved in attempts to theorize them (or the appropriation of texts that can accompany attempts to 'read' them), intent scrutiny of the manuscript has again become crucial to medieval studies.

While it is possible to detect the influence of the intellectual currents that have just been mentioned on certain aspects of the 'back to the manuscripts' movement, at the heart of this movement is a strong element of rugged empiricism. That is, by turning with new eyes, as much as that is possible, to reconsider the evidence of the manuscripts themselves, scholars have put to the test a number of generalizations that have been made about medieval literature, or about particular texts. This effort often involves bypassing the disputed category of the 'author', which post-modern theory has revealed to involve an endlessly receding mirror image involving the reader and the text. This same turn towards manuscript studies often also entails questioning the authority of modern editions, which are so easily revealed to be constructions that may or may not correspond to anything in the medieval experience of literature. Naturally, scholars working along such lines tend to work out independent methods to deal with the problems addressed.

It could be argued that this self-reliant methodology — one that is self-consciously the opposite of trendiness, even if manuscript studies itself has become a kind of trend — has long been one of the strengths of medieval studies as a discipline. Methods of this kind are well illustrated in the contributions to the present volume. Indeed, one defining feature of the 'back to the manuscripts' movement has been its willingness to respect both the authority and the alterity of medieval sources, sometimes in defiance of the judgements that are enshrined in the literary histories that line our shelves.

One of the turning points in the modern history of Anglo-Saxon studies occurred in 1980, when Fred C. Robinson's landmark essay 'Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context' was published in an anthology of critical essays that, taking issue with New Critical emphases on 'the text alone', set out to explore a number of different reading contexts within which medieval texts might be approached if they were to be fully understood.² Robinson's essay illustrated the

² Robinson's essay is found in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. by John D. Niles (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 11–29. It has since been reprinted several times. Joyce Tally Lionarons calls attention to the seminal quality of Robinson's essay in the introduction to a volume whose title is modeled on it, *Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context*, ed. by Lionarons (Morgantown, 2004), pp. 1–9 (p. 1).

scholarly rewards of examining Old English texts in the context of the codices in which they were written. This means taking account of what texts surround a given work, how those texts are laid out, and what the function or functions of the book as a whole may have been. An ensuing turn towards manuscript studies across the disciplines has encouraged research on a number of related topics, including the *mise en page* of texts,³ the use of glosses and marginalia,⁴ and the creation of poetic codices as thematic anthologies rather than random collections.⁵ In the aftermath of post-structural literary theory and renewed deep historicism, the manuscript has come to be read as a site of cultural and linguistic contact and scribal reperformance, and thus as a unique attestation of particular historical moments.

In the years since Robinson's essay appeared in print, a number of anthologies of critical essays have exemplified the twists and turns of research into the early English manuscript as scribal artefact. The present book is the latest one of these.⁶

³ As seen for example in Paul E. Szarmach, 'Æþelflæd of Mercia: *Mise en page*', in *Words and Works: Studies in Medieval English Language and Literature in Honour of Fred C. Robinson*, ed. by Peter S. Baker and Nicholas Howe (Toronto, 1998), pp. 105–26.

⁴ As seen for example in Michael Lapidge, 'The Study of Latin Texts in Late Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Latin Glosses', and R. I. Page, 'The Study of Latin Texts in Late Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of Old English Glosses', in *Latin and the Vernacular Languages in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks (Leicester, 1982), pp. 99–140 and 141–65; also Gernot R. Wieland, 'The Glossed Manuscript: Classbook or Library Book?', *ASE*, 14 (1985), 153–73, and note further Patrizia Lendinara, *Anglo-Saxon Glosses and Glossaries* (Aldershot, 1999).

⁵ Perhaps clearest in the case of a few of the Old English poetic manuscripts; note the title of Bernard J. Muir's *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, 2 vols (Exeter, 1994; repr. 2000) and his recent article 'Issues for Editors of Anglo-Saxon Poetry in Manuscript Form', in *Inside Old English: Essays in Honour of Bruce Mitchell*, ed. by John Walmsley (Oxford, 2006), pp. 181–202. Compare Patrick W. Conner's study of the Exeter Book in *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History, 4 (Woodbridge, 1993), esp. chap. 6, 'Poetry and Cultural History' (pp. 148–64), and Andy Orchard's literary consideration of *Beowulf* in conjunction with the other texts from that same manuscript in *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript* (Cambridge, 1995; repr. Toronto, 2003).

⁶ Noteworthy collections of essays relating to the Anglo-Saxon period, in addition to the one mentioned in note 2 above, are *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*, ed. by Mary P. Richards (New York, 1994), a collection of reprinted essays; *Back to the Manuscripts*, ed. by Shuji Sato (Tokyo, 1997); *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Treharne (Aldershot, 1998); and *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf (Tempe, 2006). Worth note, as well, is a proliferation of books that provide entry points to manuscript studies for those who are not yet masters of that field. Particularly relevant to the present volume are Raymond Clemens and

It does not attempt to bring this movement to any kind of teleological conclusion, but rather it contributes to the continuing trend of good work in this vein. Indeed, there is every reason to expect that such work can continue fruitfully to be undertaken for a long time to come, given the number of medieval manuscripts that are in existence (including parts and pieces of whole codices), and taking into account the potential interest of each scribal performance as, once again, a unique attestation of one writer's competence and intentions at work in a specific milieu.

The Medieval Poet as Scribe: Orm as Exemplar

These theorizations of the book as material and cultural artefact, especially as inflected by the interrelations of orality and textuality, can be made more concrete by reference to an illustrative medieval text, one that is of interest for its bearing on English textual culture during the linguistically tumultuous period following the Conquest.

In the opening dedication to the early Middle English poem *The Ormulum*, extant in a remarkable twelfth-century holograph with authorial corrections and revisions, the poet Orm reflects on the complexities of making a book. He describes his process of composition as follows:

Icc hafe sett her o þiss boc amang Goddspelless wordess
all þurh me sellfenn, maniȝ word þe rime swa to fillenn. (lines 41–44)⁷

[I have set down here in this book, among the words of the Gospels, many words, all by myself, so as to fill out the metre.]

Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca, 2007), with its many examples drawn from early English manuscripts, and *Working with Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, ed. by Gale R. Owen-Crocker (Exeter, 2009).

⁷ All quotations from *The Ormulum* are from the edition by Robert Holt, with notes and glossary by R. M. White, 2 vols (Oxford, 1878). Citations of line numbers refer to the author's Dedication. When quoting from this edition, we silently expand Orm's abbreviation for 'and'. The poet actually spells his own name 'Orrm', in keeping with his somewhat annoyingly idiosyncratic system of orthography. It is unfair to speak of this system as annoying, of course. The essence of Orm's system is that those consonants that follow a short vowel, in a closed syllable, are doubled. This practice differs sharply from what is seen in modern editions of early medieval texts when long vowels are surmounted with macrons, or else with acute accents. Orm was obviously trying to be helpful to his readers: he wanted them to be able to give proper value to the long versus short vowels of his English text. This is an informative effort on his part, for it tells us that he did not trust his intended readers — English clerics, one must assume — to sound out the text correctly on their own. Did he assume that many of them would be speaking French or Danish as their first tongue?

What Orm is telling us is that he has paraphrased the Vulgate Gospels into the English of his day, adding some supplementary words of his own and versifying the whole text so that its aural effects — what Orm calls its *rime*, which is actually its syllabic metre⁸ — are complete. In other words, Orm is telling us that he has drawn from his own mind and memory a stock of vernacular phrases that give poetic expression to the Latin text of the Gospel readings from the Mass, together with Orm's exegetic sources. Thomas Hahn suggests that the lines just quoted indicate a two-fold audience for *The Ormulum*, one literate and one *lewed*, or illiterate;⁹ however, Orm's vernacularization of the Gospels, filled out in (or fulfilled)¹⁰ in metre, may have had a less public function than that. Christopher Cannon has recently argued that Orm's recursive labour on the poem represents a devotional habit: his writing and rewriting it may have been a way of knowing and doing, a form of life.¹¹

In any event, what is clear is that both oral and textual traditions underlie the poem, and that Orm was apparently driven to write and rewrite his work in a manner that reflects his underlying educational aim:

Acc þu shaltt findenn þatt min word, e33whær þær itt iss ekedd,
ma33 hellpenn þa þatt redenn itt to sen annd t'unnderrstanndenn
all þess te bettere. (lines 45–49)

[But you will find that my words, wherever the text is augmented, may help those who read it to see and to understand the whole of it the better.]

Orm refers to the reader's act of reading his work with the verbs 'to find', 'to read', and 'to see'. The aural and oral dimensions of the making of the book are inscribed in a chirograph made for seeing and reading. Both Orm's poem and his manuscript might even be called 'extreme text' performances, seeing that Orm's material text shows extensive revisions (especially as regards orthography) throughout the

⁸ Orm produces a regular fifteen-syllable line of seven metrical feet, developing a nascent accentual-syllabic verse form for English (probably from a Latin model). On Orm's metre, see Elizabeth Solopova, 'The Metre of the *Ormulum*', in *Studies in Language and Literature: 'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. by M. J. Toswell and Elizabeth M. Tyler (London, 1996), pp. 423–39.

⁹ Thomas Hahn, 'Early Middle English', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 61–91 (85–86).

¹⁰ Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 95–97.

¹¹ Cannon, *Grounds of English Literature*, pp. 98–101 and 82–83.

twenty thousand lines that survive. One cannot read the poem, in the manuscript in which it is recorded, without reflecting upon its status as a textual object.¹²

Yet the making of any text comes at a price. Orm is keenly aware of the ways in which a single performance of a text on parchment is subject to scribal and perhaps editorial reperformance when the manuscript is copied:

Annd whase wilenn shall þiss boc eftt operr siþe writenn
himm bidde Icc þatt he't write rihht, swa summ þiss boc himm tæcheþþ:
all þwerrett affterr þatt itt iss uppo þiss firrste bisne
wiþþ all swille rime alls her iss sett, wiþþ all se fele wordess. (lines 95–102)

[And whosoever shall desire to write this book another time, I ask of him that he write it correctly, exactly as this book teaches him, so that ever after it is based upon this first exemplar, with just the same metre as is used here and with just the same number of words.]

Here, as in the work of many other English authors from Ælfric to Chaucer, anxiety is evident as to how faithfully the text will be transmitted in later copies. Orm asks that any new copy be written *rihht*, and he firmly establishes the principle of correctness in *þiss firrste bisne* — that is to say, ‘this first exemplar’. This phrase deictically loads this material text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1) with primacy and authority. Orm submits the material witness of his work to the vicissitudes of human reception, with all of the problems and promise that reception entails.

Despite his anxiety about how faithfully his work will be recorded by others, he is optimistic that it will be read, heard, and understood widely:

Annd tærfore hafe Icc turnedd itt inntill Ennglisshe spæche,
forþatt I wollde bliþeliz þatt all Ennglisshe lede
wiþþ ære sholde lisstenn itt wiþþ herrte sholde itt trowwenn
wiþþ tunge sholde spellenn itt wiþþ dede sholde itt follþhenn. (lines 129–36)

[And therefore have I turned it [the Gospel readings for the year] into the English language, because I gladly wish that all English people with ears should hear it, with hearts should believe it, with tongues should say it, with deeds should follow it.]

The primacy of the manuscript develops into the complexity of the forms of human internalization of a text. Orm’s physical act of turning the lore of the Gospels into English speech in the form of a book opens up the possibility of his work being performed aloud, heard by multitudes as well as taken to heart and acted upon. His

¹² *The Ormulum* is extant in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1; on the manuscript, see M. B. Parkes, ‘On the Presumed Date and Possible Origin of the Manuscript of the *Ormulum*: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1’, in *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, ed. by E. G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 115–27. If *The Ormulum* had been completed as Orm had planned, it would contain over 160,000 lines of verse.

prologue constructs the book as a corporeal act — one that is gathered, set, and turned — and he visualizes its reception in corporeal terms as well ('heard with ears, pronounced with tongues, and practised in deeds'). According to Hahn, Orm in these passages is imagining the communicative efficacy of his poetry in a situation where the Word becomes performed by a preacher for a public audience and in turn is reperformed in the lives of those listeners.¹³ Cannon reads these same lines (and others like them) as performative in an interior sense, so that authorial intention, scribal inscription, and audience reception are made virtually equivalent.¹⁴ In either scenario, for Orm, the main reason for his use of the vernacular is its efficacy in enacting belief.

Hahn argues that Orm's concerns are public and national — the vernacular is constructed to serve an 'Ennglisshe lede' — but that compared with Latin, the vernacular language is unstable and demands obsessive controls, such as Orm's radical orthography. Cannon, on the other hand, evokes Orm's work as a material language that embodies a Derridean sense of *différance*. That is, the author's recursion (his revising, rewriting, repeating) becomes something akin to Zen walking meditation: the promise of meaning is continually pursued and yet always deferred, for its pursuit in physical writing is a spiritual practice. Where these two views overlap is in the *firreste bisne*, where orality merges with textuality and the self with the world. This intricate dynamic illuminates our understanding of twelfth-century English language and literary form. In addition, in a sense, Orm is theorizing the centrality of the manuscript and its reception within a matrix of historical, human, and cultural events, and his theorization resonates with the ways in which the medieval manuscript has come to be studied in the last few decades.

Theorizing the Work of Scribes

The rich and complex making of a material book, as that process is described by Orm in the preface to his poem, illuminates the problematic complexities represented by each unique medieval English vernacular manuscript. These are the very complexities that have returned manuscript study to an energetic and productive state, as the manuscript has come to be recognized as 'not just indifferent text-bearing surface but also a three dimensional object demanding attention in its own

¹³ Hahn, 'Early Middle English', pp. 86–87.

¹⁴ Cannon, *Grounds of English Literature*, pp. 97–110; cf. Cannon, 'Spelling Practice: The *Ormulum* and the Word', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 33 (1997), 229–44 (p. 230).

right'.¹⁵ This interest in the manuscript as material artefact and physical text has emerged, in part, from theoretical work that has transformed current thinking as to the stability with which the word — living and spoken — is ever materialized in visible form. To some extent, this thinking emerged out of a consideration of the intersections between oral theory and deconstruction, in the period of the 1980s,¹⁶ as is eloquently represented by the work of Paul Zumthor. Zumthor speaks of the *mouvance* of medieval texts, their 'radical instability' in a world of multiple scribes and multiple performers,¹⁷ and in so doing he generates a new status for the material witnesses to literary acts. As he notes, 'Each version of a text, as it adopts a new form, should in theory be treated [...] as a new creation.'¹⁸ These new, authentic, and original creations consist only of their unique manuscript copies, analogous to Orm's *firreste bisne*, a text of which no copies exist.¹⁹

Viewed in this light, every single manuscript version of a text demands an ethical and perceptive reader.²⁰ 'Whatever else it is,' as Nick Doane writes, 'a manuscript text is more than a text, it is also an exact record of myriad particular somatic events amounting to a performance, which we can still experience soundlessly, if we pay attention.'²¹ Once the manuscript has been conceived as a legible record of a work's reception and transmission, then attention to its scribal features — its script, layout, glosses, illumination, and the like — provides an opportunity to analyse the historical and cultural conditions of a particular text's making and use.

¹⁵ A. N. Doane, 'Oral Texts, Intertexts, and Intratexts: Editing Old English', in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, ed. by Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein (Madison, 1991), pp. 75–113 (p. 85).

¹⁶ This intersection is the site of the analyses in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, 1991). These studies seek to go beyond the earlier attempts of the classicist Milman Parry and his successor Albert B. Lord to develop a theory of oral epic composition-in-performance; they also seek to go beyond Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of oral/literary binarism.

¹⁷ Paul Zumthor, 'The Impossible Closure of the Oral Text', *Yale French Studies*, 67 (1984), 25–42 (p. 31).

¹⁸ Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. by Phillip Bennett (Minneapolis, 1992), p. 47.

¹⁹ As Doane, 'Oral Texts', formulates them: 'these texts reperformed in their writing will be new originals' (p. 81).

²⁰ John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in a Manuscript Culture* (Princeton, 1994).

²¹ A. N. Doane, 'Beowulf and Scribal Performance', in *Unlocking the Wordboard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. by Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto, 2003), pp. 62–75 (p. 63).

The manuscript thus becomes a record of cosmopolitan contact, discursive practices, social and political ideologies, and human activities within these cultural fields. For the literary study of medieval England in particular, which for the last several decades has been driven in part by neo-historicist initiatives, the rethinking of manuscript evidence has led to significant recuperative work illuminating facets of the pre-modern English world.

Furthermore, this redefinition of the scribal text — especially with regard to vernacular poetry — has considerable consequences for how these texts are presented in modern editions. ‘Whenever scribes who are part of the oral traditional culture write or copy traditional oral works’, as Doane has remarked, ‘they do not merely mechanically hand them down; they rehear them, “mouth” them, “reperform” them in the act of writing in such a way that the text may change but remain authentic’,²² much as may happen when a singer of traditional epic tales varies his words from performance to performance. This perspective, if it is granted, concedes a radical authority to the witnesses to medieval vernacular poems, especially when those poems survive in only a single copy. The same is true even when a poem survives in multiple manuscripts. Even ‘routine’ editorial interventions in the text, from this perspective, require rigorous justification. Indeed, writes Doane, every emendation might be regarded as ‘strictly speaking, a logical absurdity, and practically speaking, a small defeat, an abandonment of the text, necessary sometimes for providing sense without [necessarily] restoring it’.²³ This shift in attitude as to the authority of scribal texts encourages a reconsideration of the whole set of critical assumptions and objectives that underlie the making of modern scholarly editions, and thus impacts the way, still today, scholars participate in the reception and transmission of medieval literature.

The Contents of the Present Book

Manuscript illumination and other visual arts, even from the earliest period of insular Christian history, incorporate a remarkably diverse array of artistic motifs, especially in deluxe gospel books. In the first essay in the present volume, Michelle Brown examines a wealth of evidence that points to early medieval cultural exchange between the British Isles and the Middle East. By linking such an archaeological find as an early Irish ogham epigraph for ‘Olan the Egyptian’ to Eastern features in

²² Doane, ‘Oral Texts’, pp. 80–81.

²³ ‘Preface’ to *Genesis A: A New Edition*, ed. by A. N. Doane (Madison, 1978), p. xi.

Hiberno-Saxon manuscripts, such as the St Luke miniature in the Lichfield Gospels that borrows its iconographic posture from the Egyptian Osiris pose, Brown sheds light on the cultural syncretism of early Christian book-making and the surprising range of contacts between Britain and the eastern Mediterranean world. In turn, these cosmopolitan connections have broader religious implications, illuminating the ecumenical and transnational reach of early medieval Christianity.

Similar cultural synthesis is displayed through Katherine E. Lynch's close analysis of the unique prosimetrical charm beginning *wið dweorh* that is preserved in the Anglo-Saxon manuscript known as *Lacnunga* (London, British Library, MS Harley 585). With its prescriptive directions for use that combine bodily inscription and vocal incantation, and with its proximity in the manuscript to several prose charms directed against a similar malady, *Wið dweorh* appears to record a Zumthorian presence of the voice. Even so, this record of oral folk medicine integrates learned and textual materials, such as Greek letters and an allusion to the 'Seven Sleepers' legend of medieval Latin tradition. Lynch shows that the boundaries between text and speech, pagan and Christian practice, and Latin and English textual traditions are to some extent modern inventions: her consideration of this charm in its manuscript context forces us to rethink such bounds.

As John D. Niles makes clear, a similar matrix of the oral and written lies behind the complexities of language in the early ninth-century document known as the Fonthill Letter, which may have been dictated to a scribe working on wax tablets before it was copied on parchment. Niles analyses several of the Fonthill Letter's notorious linguistic cruces, offering a fresh view of the social and legal history underlying this text. Niles resolves a knotty enigma by identifying one of these lexical items (**spor-wrecel*) as a ghost word. In so doing, he draws out the meaning and sense — and even the tone and feel — of this unique personal letter. Furthermore, in considering these cruces, he illuminates the possible genesis of the text and the various stages that lie behind the sole extant copy. Niles's account sketches the performances that led to its current form and suggests the ways that the letter was meant to perform personally, politically, and legally in its contemporary context.

The two studies that follow propose public performance contexts for two major Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, thus bringing to life the world where these books may have been made and used. Jonathan Wilcox considers the many layers of historical traces in the unique manuscript containing the Blickling Homilies (Princeton University Library, MS Scheide 71). Through analysis of that manuscript's physical structure, script, dialect, and history, Wilcox suggests that it was made and used in Lincoln (Anglo-Saxon Lindsey). This account of the manuscript's provenance allows him to postulate an interactive performance context for the Blickling Homilies, and by this means, Wilcox addresses a long-standing question: who read and

heard these pieces? The growing populace of Lincoln, with its increasing wealth and its multiple churches and congregations, would have provided many fitting audiences for these sermons, with their flamboyant imagery and orthodox doctrine. This would have been true both before and after the Norman cathedral was erected at Lincoln between 1072 and 1092, thus lending the city, now an episcopal see, greater importance and prestige than it had previously known.

Patrick W. Conner takes up a suite of contiguous Old English poems in the Exeter Book of Old English poetry. He describes the fraternal guild of Exeter, the place where the Exeter Book has been located at least since the mid-twelfth century, and he reconstructs the guild feast as it is likely to have taken place there, drawing on the Abbotsbury guild statutes to fill in this picture. The social function of the feast ritual — combining food, drink, and oral performance — is seen to be confirmed by the discursive work done by verse. If Conner's suggestion is accepted, then these Exeter Book poems would have helped to construct the civic and spiritual identity of a particular group of citizens. While Conner does not try to take into account all the possible functions, uses, and audiences of the whole contents of the Exeter Book — after all, any book, once published, can have any number of users — it pinpoints one group of real persons who, in a convivial setting, could have internalized the words inscribed so neatly on this vellum.

In an essay focused on the Exeter Book's composition, Brian O'Camb finds in the manuscript's material form and page layout a means to account for the phrases that echo between several of these poems (for nearly identical gnomic statements are found in *Exeter Maxims*, *The Seafarer*, and *The Fates of Mortals*). Visual cues in the Exeter Book's eleventh quire permit O'Camb, remarkably, to reconstruct exemplars for certain folios in that quire, thus showing how these repeated phrases once occupied positions of visual prominence. Rather than seeing the gnomic pronouncements of the Exeter Book as the tip of the iceberg of a vast oral tradition of wisdom poetry, he approaches the extant texts of that manuscript as the product of reperformances by one or more scribes working from exemplars right at hand. His argument has consequences for our understanding of how parts of the Exeter Book came into being, for to a certain extent, it erases the customary distinction between poet and scribe.

As O'Camb shows, the making of a book can be reconstructed from its physical features, and this reconstruction can suggest much about the meaning of works to their creators and immediate users. Peter J. Lucas pursues a similar approach in his analysis of the famous Vercelli Book. By focusing his attention on minute variations in quire structure, page layout, gaps, and additions, Lucas recounts the history of the manuscript as well as the scribe's compositional practices, which are both haphazard and intentional. The result is that Lucas sheds light on the gestation and formation of this important collection of Old English homilies and poems.

A different set of scribal additions and omissions are examined by Matthew T. Hussey in his account of the deluxe twelfth-century Canterbury Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846). Hussey examines this book as one of a series of psalters produced at Christ Church, Canterbury, from *c.* 1000 to *c.* 1200. He notes the major developments in illustration, based on international models, that are to be found in this manuscript, and he discusses the reasons why it omits the Old English gloss that is found in its exemplar, the splendid Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1). These innovations and this act of suppression clarify the historical changes that were taking place at Christ Church during the twelfth century, within a few generations after the Conquest, even as the residual Old English glosses in the Canterbury Psalter demonstrate continuities of English language and culture across the cataclysmic year of 1066.

The persistence of English performed poetry during much of the Middle Ages is emphasized in Karl Reichl's study of the codicological and musical settings of the earliest English lyrics. Taking account of the French and Latin literary contexts of these poems, as well as their English roots, Reichl reconstructs a history of lyric song in England from the late Anglo-Saxon period to the early fourteenth century. Reichl shows that during this long period, the English lyric blossomed in musical performance in a tradition comparable with what we see elsewhere in Europe, even though its written remains are relatively sparse. The essay features new transcriptions of these early lyrics made on the basis of fresh study of the manuscript sources. While a German version of Reichl's important study is available in print, many medievalists will welcome access to it in the graceful English prose that the author has provided here.

This collection concludes with a suite of essays that draw together many of the previous theoretical and methodological moves, but now with attention to the historical, lexical, and textual imperatives that arise from close manuscript study and that shape the making of not just manuscript books, but also modern scholarly ones. In a survey of quite a few Old English manuscripts, Donald Scragg demonstrates the wealth of knowledge to be gained by careful perusal of the work of scribes. After showing that a sharp-eyed examination of a manuscript as well known as the Royal Psalter (London, British Library, MS Royal 2.B.v) can unsettle customary scholarly assumptions about the history and origins of a book, he focuses on the details of scribal practices in punctuation and ligatures. These focused analyses of scribal work exemplify the discoveries that can await those working directly on manuscripts. To cite one example, Scragg shows that punctuation practices across three scribal renditions of a particular Ælfrician homily reveal that the use of the *punctus interrogativus* may go back to Ælfric himself. He also

demonstrates that one of the scribes of an Old English homiliary (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 114) was likely an especially important reader and producer of the book, high up in the monastic hierarchy. Scragg's revelations have a bearing on the origins of particular texts, as well as on how best those texts might be presented in modern editions.

In a study with high stakes for both manuscript studies and the study of modern medievalism, Elaine M. Treharne looks at the scribal hands involved in the making of numerous manuscripts so as to interrogate one of the foundational tools of medieval studies, palaeography. Taking close account of the foremost reference book for the study of Old English manuscripts, N. R. Ker's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, Treharne assesses the aesthetically evaluative language of Ker's *Catalogue* with relation to the history of palaeography in England, which she sees as influenced by the science (or pseudoscience) known as graphology, as well as by the Arts and Crafts movement. By testing Ker's aesthetic judgements against her own fresh examinations of scribal hands, Treharne suggests that a new, less impressionistic lexicon for describing early English bookhands could illuminate the way forward, now that the digital revolution has left palaeography at a disciplinary crossroads.

Tim William Machan draws this book to a close, while not closing off the issues that it raises, by considering the diversity of English manuscript culture during the period after the Conquest and the many choices that were and are available to the readers of medieval books. Medieval manuscripts were participatory, open to rearrangement, subtraction, and supplementation. Whatever interventions were involved in the making of these books, they reflect different ordering principles, ranging from authorial shaping to an attempt to arrange a miscellany of texts into some kind of overarching design. Each scribal or editorial intervention makes available different conditions for the reception of these texts. By retheorizing editorial practice in light of the plurality and fluidity of medieval manuscript culture, Machan demonstrates that many editorial practices obscure the interpretive implications of the books themselves. Editorial choice is itself provisional and is the product of discrete historical influences, just as were the practices of medieval book producers. As readers of Machan's essay will find, anyone who is exposed to the diversity of medieval manuscripts will also discover a rich range of possibilities for understanding them.

A Closing Tip of the Hat

The contributors to the present volume have one thing in common, besides their professional interest in early English manuscripts and texts, and this is that they are

all colleagues, friends, and/or former students of A. N. 'Nick' Doane. They are also aware, both individually and collectively, how much they have gained from their personal contacts with Nick Doane over the years, as well as from his numerous, multifaceted contributions to medieval studies. For a list of those publications, the reader is referred to pp. xvii–xxi of the present book. The multiphased production of medieval literary texts — from the original composition of texts, to the scribal performance of them, to the presentation of those chirographic records in modern editions — has long been a focus of Nick Doane's career. His work has been at the forefront of developments in the study of orality and textuality, editorial theory and practice, and medieval manuscript production alike. Nick edited two major early medieval vernacular texts (the Old English *Genesis A* and the Old Saxon/Old English *Genesis* and *Genesis B*) with scrupulous attention to the special factors that are involved in the scholarly recovery of such works. His 1991 co-edited collection *Vox Intexta* (with Carol Braun Pasternack) explored the oral/aural nexus of medieval poetry and the manner in which words and implied voices interact on the handwritten page. His 2006 co-edited volume *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano* (with Kirsten Wolf) is a major tribute to another admired researcher into the scribal culture of the Middle Ages; it consists of fourteen specialized studies of medieval manuscripts and their interface with print culture.

Not least among his achievements, Nick instituted (with Phil Pulsiano) a major international project, Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile, which is in the process of generating new descriptions, and facsimile copies, of every manuscript that contains Old English. After Pulsiano's untimely death in the year 2000, Nick assumed full responsibility for this major NEH-funded project, for which nineteen volumes have been published as of 2011, with approximately twenty in preparation. This project addresses a problem with which specialists have long had to deal, namely that of securing access to the original sources on which, ultimately, all Old English scholarship is based. Taking advantage of this new means of access to early medieval manuscripts, and with concomitant reflection on the culture in which medieval texts were produced, the essays featured in the present book take into new dimensions the kinds of research that Nick has long promoted.

It is with pleasure that we present this book, *The Genesis of Books*, as a tribute to Nick Doane, an eminent specialist in early English and Saxon versions of Genesis, an admired teacher and colleague at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, and a life-long *aficiando* of medieval books and their makers.

THE EASTWARDNESS OF THINGS: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN CULTURES OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE INSULAR WORLD

Michelle P. Brown

Christianity is Middle Eastern in its origins, and yet so much of its history as a religion has been played out in the West that it may sometimes seem like a western faith tradition. Christian communities around the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, some now struggling for survival, can seem remote. Yet the ecumenical ties binding the churches of East and West are long lived and stem from the first centuries AD, when Christ's teachings spread eastwards to India and westwards to the islands of Britain and Ireland. The Christian cultures of both regions were shaped by the blending of the asceticism of the desert fathers, the legacy of the late Roman world, and their own local traditions and styles.¹

Germanic, Celtic, Gaulish, and Roman influences upon the Insular Christian culture of Britain and Ireland, c. 550–850, are readily explicable in terms of documented contact and patterns of social and economic interaction. The eastern element is harder to pinpoint. Ever since Edmund Bishop commented on traces of

¹ For a general introduction, see Michelle P. Brown, *How Christianity Came to Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006). For an overview of the archaeological evidence for early Christianity in Britain, see *The Archaeology of Celtic Britain and Ireland c. AD 400–1200*, ed. by Lloyd Laing (Cambridge, 2006); *The Early Church in Wales and the West*, ed. by Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane (Oxford, 1992); *Glastonbury: Myth and Archaeology*, ed. by Philip Rahtz and Lorna Watts (Stroud, 2003); Sam Turner, *Making a Christian Landscape: The Countryside in Early Medieval Cornwall, Devon and Wessex* (Exeter, 2006); Niall Finneran, 'Extending the Christian Frontier in Late Antiquity: Monks, Mission, Monasteries and the Christianisation of Space', in *Missionary Landscapes*, ed. by Z. Crossland, University College London Monographs in Archaeology (London, forthcoming). For a review of the written evidence, see David N. Dumville, 'Sub-Roman Britain: History and Legend', *History*, 62 (1977), 173–92.

liturgical influence from the eastern churches, since Kathleen Hughes and other historians focused upon the distinctive nature of Irish monasticism, and art historians such as Françoise Henry began to detect corresponding stylistic and iconographic links, it has been acknowledged that there was an eastern component to Insular religious life and art.² This has taken the form of disjointed notices of specific instances, considered as second-hand influence disseminated via southern Gaul and Spain. So, what do these instances comprise? Were they cultural coincidences, parallel responses, or part of a broader European absorption of sporadic eastern influence, or might they, on occasion, betoken actual contact between these far-flung regions?

People travelled more than one might expect. Traditions from Britain and Ireland and the Christian Orient hint at visits in both directions, whilst Insular liturgy and litanies include numerous references to practices and figures from the Near East.³ There is a reference, in the life of St John the Almsgiver, Greek

² See for example Edmund Bishop's discussion of 'Spanish symptoms' such as the veneration of the Cross and the Virgin in Insular devotions and liturgy, in Bishop, *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford, 1919), pp. 165–202; Kathleen Hughes, *Early Christian Ireland: Introduction to the Sources* (London, 1971); Kathleen Hughes and Ann Hamlin, *Celtic Monasticism: The Modern Traveller to the Irish Church* (New York, 1981); and Françoise Henry, *L'Art Irlandais*, 3 vols (Yonne, 1963–64) and *The Book of Kells* (London, 1974).

³ For discussion of the transmission of eastern influences to these western isles, see Frederick E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford, 1881); Frank E. Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern and Western* (Oxford, 1896); Charles Plummer, *Irish Litanies*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 67 (London, 1925), pp. 54–75; Nils Åberg, *The Occident and the Orient in the Art of the Seventh Century*, 2 vols (Stockholm, 1943), vol. I; Nora Chadwick, *The Age of the Saints in the Early Celtic Church* (Oxford, 1961); Aziz S. Atiya, *History of Eastern Christianity* (Notre Dame, 1967), pp. 55–59 onwards; Emrys G. Bowen, *Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands* (Cardiff, 1969); Hilary Richardson, 'Observations on Christian Art in Early Ireland, Georgia and Armenia', in *Ireland and Insular Art, AD 500–1200*, ed. by Michael Herity (Dublin, 1987), pp. 129–38; and Fr. Gregory Telepneff, *The Egyptian Desert in the Irish Bogs: The Byzantine Character of Early Celtic Monasticism* (Etna, CA, 1998), esp. pp. 14–15. Telepneff and Atiya are inclined to overestimate the reliability and extent of the sources. More measured discussion occurs in John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977). See also 'Art, Coptic and Irish' and 'British Isles, Coptic Influence in the', in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. by Aziz S. Atiya, 8 vols (New York, 1991), I, 251–54 and II, 417–19, respectively; Jonathan M. Wooding, *Communication and Commerce along the Western Sealand, AD 400–800*, BAR International Series, 654 (Oxford, 1996); Michelle P. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London, 2003), esp. pp. 28–32; Bob Quinn, *The Atlantean Irish: Ireland's Oriental and Maritime Heritage* (Dublin, 2005); *In the Beginning: Bibles before the Year 1000*, ed. by Michelle P. Brown (Washington, DC, 2006); Ewan Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports to Atlantic Britain and Ireland, AD 400–800*, CBA Research Report, 157 (York, 2007); and R. K. Ritner, Jr, 'Egyptians in Ireland: A Question of Coptic Peregrinations', *Rice University Studies*, 62 (1976),

Patriarch of Alexandria (610–21), to the relief of famine in south-western Britain conducted on the back of tin-trading between Cornwall and Alexandria.⁴ Certainly pottery indicating continuing trade with the Mediterranean and North Africa during the post-Roman period occurs in sites, such as Tintagel, along the Atlantic seaboard.⁵ Archdale King nonetheless questioned Henri Leclercq's assumption of direct eastern monastic influence in favour of intermediary transmission via southern Gaul, where John Cassian and his foundation of Lérins (where St Patrick may have trained) had introduced the teachings of the desert fathers.⁶

The five visits to Rome undertaken by Benedict Biscop, gathering icons and books to stock one of the greatest western libraries — Wearmouth/Jarrow — are well known. He was accompanied on various of these trips by Ceolfrith and Wilfrid, later Archbishop of York. The massive church Wilfrid built at Hexham, *more romanum*, had at its heart a crypt, modelled on the Holy Sepulchre, filled with relics collected during his travels. Wilfrid's other crypt at Ripon became the centre of his own cult from 709/10, the focal point of which was a purple codex he probably acquired abroad. Wilfrid's enduring monuments therefore assembled iconic references to *romanitas*, the Holy Places, and the imperial dignity, expressed through the Byzantine taste for visible consumption of costly materials in books, such as gold and silver inks and purple-dyed pages.⁷

65–87. For the Coptic origins of the 'Celtic' wheel cross, see Walter Horn, 'On the Origin of the Celtic Cross', in *The Forgotten Hermitage of Skellig Michael*, ed. by Walter Horn, Jenny White Marshall, and Grellan D. Rourke (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 89–93. For a readable general background, see William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey among the Christians of the Middle East* (London, 1997). See also Jacob G. Ghazarian, *The Mediterranean Legacy in Early Celtic Christianity: A Journey from Armenia to Ireland* (London, 2006).

⁴ Archdale King, *Liturgies of the Past* (London, 1959), pp. 228–29; Gerard MacGinty, 'The Influence of the Desert Fathers on Early Irish Monasticism', *Monastic Studies*, 14 (1983), 85–91. Note also the discussion of St John the Almsgiver in Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, p. 131, and Wooding, *Communication and Commerce*, p. 46.

⁵ Campbell, *Continental and Mediterranean Imports*, and Wooding, *Communication and Commerce*. See also Charles Thomas, 'Imported Late-Roman Mediterranean Pottery in Ireland and Western Britain: Chronology and Implications', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 76c (1979), 245–55, and Thomas, 'The Context of Tintagel: A New Model for the Diffusion of Post-Roman Imports', *Cornish Archaeology*, 2 (1988), 7–26.

⁶ Henri Leclercq, *L'Afrique Chrétienne* (Paris, 1904); Archdale King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, 2 vols (Rome, 1948), I, 373–75.

⁷ On Wilfrid's purple codex, as recounted by Stephen of Ripon, see Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 277. On purple codices, see *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, nos 44, 64, 70.

Wilfrid was but one of a number of Insular pilgrims to Rome. Pilgrimage to the Holy Land escalated following St Helena's investigations of the biblical sites in the early fourth century. That same century, the Spanish nun Etheria/Egeria recorded her journeys to the Holy Places, including Mount Sinai.⁸ Around 680 a Frankish bishop, Arculf, was returning from pilgrimage to Judea and northern Africa when his ship was blown off course, taking him to Iona. There he dictated his recollections to Abbot Adomnán, who inscribed them, with ground plans, on wax tablets and wrote them up as *De locis sanctis*.⁹ The account was reworked by Bede to form one of the best early pilgrim guides, used by those who physically visited Judea and those who, like Bede himself, made a spiritual journey.¹⁰ During the 780s the West Saxon St Willibald dictated to the nun Hugeburc (Hygeburg, Huneberc) of Heidenheim an account of his visit to the Holy Land in the 720s–730s,¹¹ including the monastery of Mar Saba, where St John Damascene was writing *The Fount*

⁸ Etheria/Egeria recorded her pilgrimage in a travel diary, *Itinerarium Egeriae* or *Peregrinatio Aetheriae*, noting that the biblical narratives relating to each place were customarily recited there; see *Egeria's Travels*, ed. and trans. by John Wilkinson (London, 1971). See also *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, p. 267; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*; and Peter Harbison, *Pilgrimage in Ireland* (London, 1991).

⁹ Martin Werner, 'The Cross-Carpet Page in the Book of Durrow: The Cult of the True Cross, Adomnán and Iona', *Art Bulletin*, 72 (1990), 174–223, has even suggested that the carpet pages of the Book of Durrow, perhaps made on Iona around this time, represent schematic ground plans of the Holy Places.

¹⁰ Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, ed. by Denis Meehan, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, 3 (Dublin, 1958); Bede, *Liber de locis sanctis*, ed. by Paul Geyer, in *Itinera Hierosolymitana saeculi IIII–VIII*, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 39 (Vienna, 1898), pp. 299–324; and Thomas O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places: The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on the Location of the Biblical Drama* (London, 2007). There is an English translation by James R. Macpherson, *The Pilgrimage of Arculfus in the Holy Land, about the Year AD 670*, *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society*, 3 (London, 1895). The *Vita* of the Cornish St Petroc, although historically unreliable, also records his pilgrimage to Rome, Jerusalem, and an island of hermits in the eastern ocean; see Lynette Olson, *Early Monasteries in Cornwall* (Woodbridge, 1989), p. 67.

¹¹ This account of travels, including Italy, Sicily, Cyprus, Ephesus, Constantinople, Egypt, Syria, and the Holy Land, is known as the *Hodoeporicon*; it is edited by Oswald Holder-Egger in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, 15.1 (Hannover, 1887), pp. 80–117; English translation by C. H. Talbot, *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London, 1954), pp. 151–77. See also Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946), and C. H. Talbot, 'Hodoeporicon of St Willibald', in *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park, 1995), pp. 141–64.

of Knowledge. This refutation of heresies included the first Christian discussion of Islam, presented as essentially a Christian heresy, like Arianism and Monotheism.¹² In the 730s St Boniface wrote from the Germanic mission-fields to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking him to stem the waves of unaccompanied Englishwomen travelling abroad, for many perished or wound up in the brothels of Lombardy and Gaul.¹³ Writing in defence of the morals of such Englishwomen, Boniface was in part displaying erudition by quoting a passage from Eusebius (one that demonstrates that European women were already travelling widely in the fourth century). Women also risked life and limb in missionary endeavours, as did Leoba, Boniface's kinswoman, who was renowned for her learning and poetry. Irish men were also inveterate travellers, whether as missionaries, preachers, or hermits, and in the ninth century they were ridiculed in the Carolingian Empire as *gyrovagues* — troublesome itinerants who disregarded local authority.

Journeys might also take a westerly direction. An ogham stone near St Olan's Well, Aghabulloge, Co. Cork, has been deciphered as 'Pray for Olan the Egyptian',¹⁴ although this may be a generic reference to local Egyptian-style hermits rather than an ethnic indicator.¹⁵ Likewise, at Templebreacan on Inishmore (in the Aran Isles) an early Christian stone marks the graves of the Seven Romani — seven anonymous Romans who may have studied there.¹⁶

¹² William Dalrymple, 'The Egyptian Connection', *New York Review of Books*, 55, no. 16 (23 October 2008). See Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, 1997).

¹³ Michelle P. Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England: The Evidence of the Ninth-Century Prayerbooks', in *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Papers in Honour of Jane Roberts*, ed. by Christian Kay and Louise Sylvester (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 45–68. *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, ed. Michael Tangl, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae selectae 1, 2d ed. (Berlin, 1955), no. 78.

¹⁴ King, *Liturgies of the Past*; Abba Seraphim, 'On the Trail of the Seven Monks of Egypt', *Glastonbury Bulletin*, 8, no. 91 (November 1995), 89–92.

¹⁵ In a recent review, William Dalrymple ('The Egyptian Connection') writes: 'Certainly the early monks of Britain and Ireland consciously regarded Saint Antony of Egypt as their ideal and their prototype, an inspiration that was acknowledged by contemporaries: in a letter to Charlemagne, the Northumbrian scholar Alcuin of York described the Irish monks as "*pueri Egyptiaci*". The proudest boast of Celtic monasticism was that, in the words of the Antiphony of Bangor: 'This house full of delight | Is built on the rock | And indeed the true vine | Transplanted out of Egypt.' See also note 34 below.

¹⁶ Peter Harbison, *Guide to the National Monuments in the Republic of Ireland* (Dublin, 1970), p. 84. Could these also be 'the seven monks of Egypt [who lived] in Disert Uilaig' on the west coast

The year 669 saw the arrival in Canterbury of Archbishop Theodore of Tarsus (from Asia Minor, who may have studied in Antioch in Syria)¹⁷ and Hadrian, a North African who had latterly been Abbot of Naples and who, as Abbot of St Augustine's, assisted Theodore in his ecclesiastical and educational development of the early English Church. Canterbury was thus a truly cosmopolitan melting-pot of people and influences.¹⁸ The Canterbury school established by Theodore and Hadrian taught Latin and Greek (and perhaps even a little Hebrew), theology, exegesis, computistics, poetry, astronomy, medicine, and Gregorian chant.¹⁹ John, papal archcantor, was also seconded to the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow to teach chant, for musical notation was not in use until the ninth century.

The arrival of these international players in England came on the heels of the Synod of Whitby (664), which debated Columban and Roman practices, notably methods for calculating the date of Easter. These were symptomatic of whether the English Church and people should embrace the European ecclesiastical mainstream. Such matters were of vital import to the churches of East and West. The First Paschal Controversy had been one of the key issues addressed at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), for it raised the spectre of schism. One of the other factors colouring English relations with Rome was the Monothelete controversy, which had caused eastern schisms and had caused Pope Martin I (649–55) to be martyred. The English church played a key role in the debate. In 679 Archbishop Theodore convened the Council of Hatfield, which affirmed the faith of

of Ireland, commemorated in the Irish Litany of Saints (see note 96 below): Ritner, 'Egyptians in Ireland'.

¹⁷ Michael Lapidge, 'The Career of Archbishop Theodore', in *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies in his Life and Influence*, ed. by Lapidge, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 11 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1–29 (p. 3).

¹⁸ On the importation of books from the Mediterranean to England at this time, see David N. Dumville, 'The Importation of Mediterranean Manuscripts into Theodore's England', in *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 96–108. See also David Ganz, 'Roman Manuscripts in Francia and Anglo-Saxon England', in *Roma fra Oriente e Occidente*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 49 (Spoleto, 2002), pp. 607–48; Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 5–52.

¹⁹ Michael Lapidge and Bernhard Bischoff, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 10 (Cambridge, 1994); *Archbishop Theodore*, ed. by Lapidge. See also David Howlett, 'Hellenic Learning in Insular Latin: An Essay on Supported Claims', *Peritia*, 12 (1998), 54–78; Walter Berschin, *Griechisch-Lateinisches Mittelalter* (Bern, 1980); and Mary C. Bodden, 'Evidence for the Knowledge of Greek in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 17 (1988), 217–46.

the English church in the doctrine that Christ had a fully human will, accompanied by human courage. It thereby rejected the Monothelite denial of Christ's human will (since human will was thought to conflict with his perfect divine will). Pope Agatho sent John the Archcantor to represent him at this council, and John accompanied Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith back to Northumbria — not only to teach singing, but also to promote Catholic orthodoxy in Britain.

Hatfield was one of several European councils preparatory to the Sixth Ecumenical Council held in Constantinople in 681, which proclaimed that the divine and human wills were coherently united in Christ who, being incorruptible, never conflicted with the divine will. This incorruptibility lay in his conception, without corruption, from the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.²⁰ The evangelist images of the Lindisfarne Gospels formulate a neat visual summary of the English position: the bearded, ageing figures of Matthew and Luke symbolize the mortal aspect of Christ's human will, whilst the clean-shaven, youthful figures of Mark and John represent his immortal divine will.²¹

The church politics of the East therefore reverberated in the West, and from the 650s onwards the cult of the Virgin and the veneration of the Cross developed in response in Rome (from eastern roots), influencing its liturgy and art. These themes also rapidly permeated Insular culture, whether via Rome or the East.²² A major vehicle of such cultural transmission was the book, for Insular manuscripts reflected eastern trends. The full-page figural scenes of the Syriac Rabbula Gospels (made at Beth Zagba in 586),²³ for example, find rare early western responses in the

²⁰ For an introduction to these developments, see Brown, *How Christianity Came to Britain and Ireland*.

²¹ London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D IV; see Michelle P. Brown, 'Bearded Sages and Beautiful Boys: Insular and Anglo-Saxon Attitudes to the Iconography of the Beard', in *Listen, O Isle, Unto Me: Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, ed. by Elizabeth Mullins (Cork, 2010), pp. 278–90.

²² Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1990); *The Place of the Cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Sarah L. Keefer and Karen L. Jolly, 2 vols (Woodbridge, 2006–08). The relationship of the Monothelite controversy to the iconography of the Ruthwell Cross has been discussed by Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Tradition and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), pp. 225–28.

²³ Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut. I.56. This volume has also recently been discussed by David Thomson as evidence for possible Syrian influence on Insular iconography, notably elements of falconer/evangelist iconography; see David Thomson, 'The Bewcastle Falconer-Evangelist', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 161 (2008), 1–23. Thomson

crucifixion miniature of the Durham Gospels²⁴ and the Temptation, Arrest, and Virgin and Child miniatures of the Book of Kells,²⁵ both probable Columban works of c. AD 700 and c. 800, respectively, whilst the Kentish mid-eighth-century Codex Aureus (now in the Royal Library, Stockholm) features purple pages with gold and white script, recalling Byzantine purple codices.²⁶

Syriac influence was particularly prominent in Rome during the period in question, with major immigration from Syria to Italy occurring from the third century. So large did the Syrian population of Rome become that Pope Donus (676–78) dispersed it.²⁷ Of the five Syrian popes who held office between 668 and 731, Pope Sergius (687–701) played a particularly prominent role in introducing eastern influences to Roman liturgy and art — trends that continued into the eighth century when Pope John XII (705–07) had murals painted, in Byzantine fashion, in Sta Maria Antiqua in the Forum.²⁸

The kingdoms that emerged from the maelstrom of the Roman Empire's demise contributed their own distinctive forms of ornament to manuscript illumination. Henceforth scriptures would be very different in character from the simple pamphlets used by early Christian communities, becoming potent symbols of local identities and emerging powers. Caesarea, Armenia, Syria, Coptic Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia all developed distinctive styles of codicology, script, and illumination.²⁹ Christian and Jewish bibliographic traditions in such areas weathered the

also cites, in this respect, work by Anna Gannon and William Oddy on correspondences between Anglo-Saxon sceattas bearing standing figures with cross and bird, and coinage emanating from the Caliphate of Damascus; see Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford, 2003) and William A. Oddy, 'Arab Imagery on Early Umayyad Coins in Syria and Palestine: Evidence for Falconry', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 151 (1951), 59–66.

²⁴ Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A.ii.17.

²⁵ Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 58.

²⁶ Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS A 135.

²⁷ D. Noy, 'Immigrants in Late Imperial Rome', in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Stephen Mitchell and Geoffrey Greatrex (London, 2000), pp. 12–25 (p. 18); Ignacio Peña, *Arte Cristiano de la Siria Bizantina* (Madrid, 1997), p. 232.

²⁸ Åberg, *The Occident and the Orient*, I, 44–48; P. J. Nordhagen, 'The Frescoes of John VII (AD 705–707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome', *Acta ad Archaeologium et Artium Historiam pertinentia*, 3 (1968), 97–106.

²⁹ Clifford C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt* (Warminster, 1974); Alexander Badawy, *Coptic Art and Archaeology* (Cambridge, MA, 1978); Gawdat Gabra, *Cairo: The Coptic Museum and Old Churches* (Cairo, 1993); and Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* (London, 2001). On Armenian illumination, see also Vrej Nersessian,

Islamic conquest of the eastern and southern Mediterranean from the seventh century onwards.³⁰ Islamic book production was already underway in the eighth century, and Muslim scribes, eschewing figural imagery in Scripture for fear of idolatry (as did their Jewish counterparts), evolved their own sacred calligraphy and decoration for the glorification of the Word, drawing inspiration from the Christian Orient, as did Insular scribes.³¹

In northern Europe the pagan Celtic and Germanic peoples had developed proto-writing systems, ogham and runes, in response to Roman script but used them only for short commemorative or talismanic purposes, preferring to cultivate the arts of memory and finely tuned and disciplined modes of oral transmission.³² Those peoples embraced literacy along with Christianity and, faced with the challenges of learning Latin as a foreign language, and writing it as well, made major contributions to book production. They evolved their own distinctive scripts and written languages, introduced word-separation and systematic punctuation,³³ promoted decoration as a means of articulating the text, and integrated indigenous styles of art and poetry. Due largely to their enthusiastic espousal of its potential, the medieval codex assumed much of its distinctive appearance and apparatus.

Insular missionaries evangelized both at home and within continental Europe through extensive monastic federations — monasticism having achieved popularity by around 500 through the influence of the eastern desert fathers (such as Saints Anthony, Pachomius, and Basil), whose lives are thought to have been transmitted via Italy, Spain, and Gaul.³⁴ The ‘sacred languages’ — Hebrew, Greek, and Latin — and local vernacular languages such as English and Irish (the earliest western

Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books (London, 1987); Nersessian, *The Bible in the Armenian Tradition* (London, 2001); and Niall Finneran, *The Archaeology of Ethiopia: Shaping an Identity* (London, 2007), esp. pp. 17 and 27.

³⁰ Leila Avrin, *Scribes, Script and Books* (London, 1991); François Déroche and Francis Richard, *Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient* (Paris, 1997).

³¹ See Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, pp. 234–36 and 312–15.

³² Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1981); R. I. Page, *Runes and Runic Inscriptions* (Woodbridge, 1995); Michelle P. Brown, *British Library Guide to Writing and Scripts* (London, 1998).

³³ Word-separation and systematic punctuation were also being introduced into Hebrew texts for public reading around this time. On punctuation and word-separation, see Malcolm B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Aldershot, 1992).

³⁴ See for example the discussion by Bishop of ‘Spanish Symptoms’, *Liturgica Historica*, pp. 165–210.

written vernaculars) played an important part in this process and linked East and West in a parallel approach to local languages. For in the Christian Orient, tension between 'official' written languages and those used locally was not the issue it was to become in the West. Christ's teachings originally circulated orally in Aramaic,³⁵ even if the Gospels were later written in the literary Greek of the eastern Mediterranean. There was no apparent concern about the appropriateness of communicating belief in regional languages: Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Nubian churches employed their own written vernaculars. This owed much to their desire for cultural definition and distinction (whether religious or ethnic), especially in the face of differences in belief (the Monophysite heresy being favoured by the Western Syriac, Coptic, Nubian, and Ethiopic churches). For centralized authorities tend to promote a single unifying language, while those affirming local or group identity often use language as a means of signalling independent traditions and histories.

Toleration of religious and ethnic minorities by the Caliphate and its recognition of local religious leaders as community representatives further promoted the development of self-contained regional churches with inextricably interwoven ethnic cultures and religious traditions. Positions later became more entrenched during the Crusades, with northern armies despoiling Byzantium in 1204. Finally, in 1453 Constantinople, the bridgehead between Occident and Orient, fell to the Turks, and the unfortunate, artificial rupture of the world into East and West was complete.

Saint Catherine's, Sinai, one of the most important Byzantine Orthodox monasteries, provided a meeting place of traditions at the cultural crossroads of a major pilgrim destination — a function fulfilled in England by shrines such as that of St Cuthbert. For Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Law, has been a place of pilgrimage since the fourth century, and its international contacts continued under Muslim rule from the seventh.³⁶ Its library has a remarkably polyglot, cross-cultural complexion,³⁷ reflecting the presence or influence of Greek, Syrian, Arabic, Georgian, and Slavic monks — all requiring books in their native tongues.³⁸ My recent

³⁵ The Aramaic language used by Christ was recalled by the survival of a genre known as the *Targum*, an interpretative reading of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic.

³⁶ George H. Forsyth and Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, 1973).

³⁷ Kenneth W. Clark, *Checklist of Manuscripts in St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai* (Washington, DC, 1952).

³⁸ Victor E. Gardthausen, *Catalogus codicum graecorum Sinaiticorum* (Oxford, 1886); Vladimir N. Beneševitch, *Catalogus codicum manuscritorum graecorum, qui in monasterio Sanctae*

researches at the monastery have revealed that, in addition to a couple of items previously published by Elias Avery Lowe, there are remains of a considerable number of formerly undiscovered books written in Latin, dating from before the year 1000. In addition to representing imports, some of these were local products and exhibit Insular, Frankish, Italian, and Visigothic input, sometimes blended with Greek, Syriac, and Arabic influences. This fact is of great significance, for it shows there were Latin speakers in the region long before the establishment of the Crusader kingdoms, which previously have been thought to have introduced Latinity to the Middle East.³⁹ I have even found evidence of the presence of Insular scribes in Sinai. In 599, two years after dispatching Augustine westwards to Britain, Pope Gregory the Great sent a legate bearing gifts to Sinai, establishing provision for a western contingent of monks or pilgrims at the monastery: there were thus early communications between Rome and Sinai at an influential level, and direct interaction with Insular scribes.⁴⁰

The Insular approach to the role of language in relation to unity and diversity has more in common with the polyglot traditions of the Middle East than with that of Latinate Europe. Social and ecclesiastical attitudes in early medieval Britain were very different from those that prevailed later, when Wycliffe and Tyndale were condemned for publishing scripture in English and when Latin had emerged as the principal scriptural language of the medieval West; for Latin was the adopted vernacular of a diverse empire encompassing Rome, the Carolingians, and their successors. Throughout the medieval world a plethora of collections of canonically sanctioned biblical books circulated in many different languages. This made for a 'Babel of bibles', much as exists today. The early western biblical scholars and scribes who most faithfully preserved the Latin Vulgate, the result of

Catherinae in monte Sinai asservantur, 3 vols (Hildesheim, 1911–14); Margaret D. Gibson, *Catalogue of the Arabic MSS in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai* (London, 1894); Aziz S. Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955); and Atiya, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Mount Sinai Arabic Manuscripts* (Alexandria, 1970).

³⁹ See especially St Catherine's, Mt Sinai, MS Latin New Finds 1, fol. 19^v; see *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, no. 48; Elias A. Lowe, 'An Unknown Latin Psalter on Mount Sinai', *Scriptorium*, 9 (1955), 177–99; and Lowe, 'Two Other Unknown Latin Liturgical Fragments on Mount Sinai', *Scriptorium*, 19 (1965), 3–29.

⁴⁰ *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, p. 287. On Gregory's approach to reconciling the active and contemplative lives, see Robert Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 18–23. On the Latin manuscripts of Sinai and their historical and cultural implications, see Michelle P. Brown, *Catalogue of the Latin Manuscripts of the Holy Monastery of St Catherine's, Sinai* (forthcoming) and *St Catherine's, Sinai: Bridgehead between Medieval East and West* (forthcoming).

Jerome's painstaking researches in the Holy Land during the late fourth century,⁴¹ were those of northern England, as is witnessed by the Codex Amiatinus and the Lindisfarne Gospels, both of which were produced in early eighth-century Northumbria. The former was one of three pandects made for Abbot Ceolfrith at Wearmouth/Jarrow, and the latter was made at Lindisfarne, probably by Bishop Eadfrith. These books drew upon a gospel book from Naples and other exemplars, including editions by Cassiodorus, that were edited at Wearmouth/Jarrow to produce the 'Italo-Northumbrian' family of texts.⁴²

One of the foremost advocates of the use of vernacular languages in the service of the apostolic mission, Bede, was particularly interested in the Pentecost episode in which the Apostles spoke in different tongues. In his *Commentary on Acts* (Acts 2. 6) he said that this passage could be read as meaning either that the apostles went to many different peoples and preached in their various tongues, or that they spoke only once and the Holy Spirit simultaneously translated their words.⁴³ He was criticized for this opinion by peers less well read than he, being accused of innovating rather than building upon earlier patristic thought. Bede subsequently justified himself (in his *Retractatio*) by emphasizing that he was quoting from an authoritative source, namely the eastern church father Gregory of Nazianzus.⁴⁴ Bede was not alone in his perception of the value of sharing scripture in the vernacular, in both oral and written forms. Indeed, some of the earliest examples of written vernaculars come from precisely this evangelizing context, witness Ulfilas and his use of Gothic, Mesrop and his use of Armenian, Cyril and Methodius and their use of Cyrillic, and Augustine and his receptivity to Old English.⁴⁵

⁴¹ PL, 29, col. 526c; G. W. H. Lampe, *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. II: *The West, from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 83–84.

⁴² Michelle Brown, 'Predicando con la penna: il contributo insulare alla trasmissione dei testi sacri dal VI al IX secolo', in *Forme e Modelli della Tradizione Manoscritta della Bibbia*, ed. by Paolo Cherubini, *Littera Antiqua*, 13 (Vatican City, 2005), pp. 61–108; Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, pp. 150–71.

⁴³ Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractatio*, ed. by M. L. W. Laistner, Mediaeval Academy of America Publications, 35 (Cambridge, MA, 1939), pp. 1–176; Bede, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. by Lawrence T. Martin, Cistercian Studies Series, 117 (Kalamazoo, 1989).

⁴⁴ Bede, *Exposito Actuum*, p. 110.

⁴⁵ According to Bede, Augustine committed the Germanic law code of King Æthelberht of Kent to the 'safe-keeping' of writing, being thought thereby to have invented written Old English. For an introduction to Bede's approach to the vernacular, see Michelle P. Brown, 'Bede's Life in Context: Materiality and Spirituality', in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. by Scott DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010).

Bede's interest in the vernacular relates to his recognition of the generosity of the Jews in sharing the Word with the Gentiles through the Greek Septuagint, an impulse shared by the gentile races of Britain and Ireland who sought to share their faith with others (*Commentary on Tobit*, 12 and 2. 6). On his deathbed, in 735, Bede was still sharing the Word by translating the Gospel of St John into English.⁴⁶ This work has not survived, but it may be recollected in parts of the gloss that Aldred added to the Lindisfarne Gospels c. 950–60 — the oldest surviving translation of the Gospels into English. Another gloss was added to the MacRegol Gospels (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D.2.19), a work written and illuminated in Ireland by MacRegol, abbot of Birr, during the early ninth century and thereafter glossed in English by the priests Owun and Farmon in mid-tenth-century England. By adding their names in colophons — a practice of eastern derivation — Aldred, Owun, and Farmon situated themselves, and the English language, in direct line of transmission from the divine to humankind. Colophons are comparatively rare in the West, but they occur with some frequency in Insular manuscripts (especially those of Irish background). In Armenian books, however, they are common and detailed, rendering the book an intercessory vehicle for scribe and patron. Redeeming such intercessors from captivity by non-Christians and restoring them to the Church was a pious act also recorded within Armenian manuscripts, as well as in two Insular gospel books retrieved from Vikings during the ninth century: the Lichfield Gospels and the Stockholm Codex Aureus.⁴⁷

For those who were dedicated to God's service, it was amongst the highest of callings to be entrusted with the transmission of his Word as preachers and scribes. Eastern monastic rules, by Pachomius and Basil, included the provision of time for study and scribal work, and such rules influenced European monastic founders

⁴⁶ For discussion, see Michelle P. Brown, *'In the Beginning Was the Word': Books and Faith in the Age of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 2000).

⁴⁷ On Insular colophons, see Richard G. Gameson, *The Scribe Speaks? Colophons in Early English Manuscripts*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures, 12 (Cambridge, 2001). On the Armenian practices, see Vrej Nersessian, *The Christian Orient* (London, 1978), pp. 61–62. See also *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. by Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (New York, 1994), p. xv. During the mid-ninth century the Codex Aureus was redeemed from a Viking army, in return for bullion, by Ealdorman Alfred of Surrey or Kent and his wife, Werburh, and presented to Canterbury Cathedral, whilst the Lichfield Gospels (Lichfield Cathedral Library, MS 1) was traded by a Welshman, Gelhi, for his horse and presented by him to the altar of St Teilo, Llandeilo Fawr; see Michelle P. Brown, 'The Lichfield/Llandeilo Gospels Reinterpreted', in *Authority and Subjugation in Writing of Medieval Wales*, ed. by Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York, 2008), pp. 57–70.

such as Martin of Tours and Columbanus. Monasteries became the publishing houses of medieval Christendom. Patterns of work varied, from the solitary retreat of the anchorite to the communal endeavour of the monastic scriptoria.

A few Insular gospel books, notably the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Macregol Gospels, are remarkable amongst western tomes in being produced by single artist-scribes, an eastern phenomenon.⁴⁸ To this day the Ethiopic scribes of South Gondar, employing much the same methods and materials as when Christianity became their state religion during the fourth century, can write an undecorated religious codex of some four hundred leaves in around eight to twelve months. Writing for two to three hours per day amidst farming and other church duties, they rest the leaves on their knees as they squat to write, sticking their writing horns into an adjacent cow-pat.⁴⁹ However, undertaking such a heroic feat of patience alongside the monastic duties of the Divine Office (celebrated eight times each day and night), prayer, study, and manual labour suggests that making the Lindisfarne Gospels may have taken closer to five years, depending on how much exemption was granted from other duties (as was accorded to anchorites). For if, as seems likely, Bishop Eadfrith of Lindisfarne (698–721) both conceived the vision for that codex and physically made it himself during the years c. 710–20, his responsibilities in overseeing one of the largest dioceses in Britain would have made such work additionally challenging. Some of that labour was probably undertaken on ‘Cuddy’s Isle’, a windswept tidal islet near the monastery on Holy Island where during Lent and Advent the Bishop retired on retreat to his northern ‘desert’ wilderness.⁵⁰ Combining the tasks of fasting, study, and book-copying during Lent was also favoured by Byzantine churchmen, as is recounted in the *vitae* of Euthymius, patriarch of Constantinople (d. 912), and Patriarch Methodius (d. 847), who copied a complete psalter during each of the seven weeks of Lent.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*. See also Claudia Rapp, ‘Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity’, in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. by William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington, DC, 2007), pp. 194–222.

⁴⁹ John Mellors and Ann Parsons, *Ethiopian Bookmaking* (London, 2002) and Mellors and Parsons, *Scribes of South Gondar* (London, 2002).

⁵⁰ Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*. See also Rosemary Cramp, *The Hermitage and the Offshore Island*, Second Paul Johnstone Memorial Lecture (London, 1981). There were local prehistoric roots for the phenomenon of island hermitages in Britain; see Arthur Burns, ‘Holy Men on Islands in Pre-Christian Britain’, *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 1 (1969), 2–6.

⁵¹ Rapp, ‘Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes’, p. 209.

Such eremitic scribal activity may have represented a distinctive ‘Celtic’ response to such labour as a living act of prayer, like icon writing.⁵² Whereas copying other texts was the communal work of the scriptorium, transmitting scripture was entrusted only to the most senior community members. The Irish saint Columba and his friend, the hermit St Canice, were acclaimed as hero-scribes,⁵³ the latter writing a gospel book single-handedly, for copying the Gospels was seen as the highest scribal calling. Solitary scribal heroics were a recognized feature of Near Eastern production of sacred text. A Coptic ostrakon refers to a would-be priest who, as a path to ordination, undertook to copy and study St John’s Gospel.⁵⁴ In 488 St Barnabus’s tomb in Cyprus was opened, and the Apostle was found with St Mark’s autograph Gospel on his breast — a deposition perhaps intentionally recalled when the little Wearmouth/Jarrow gospel was placed inside St Cuthbert’s coffin.⁵⁵ Nor were such ascetic scribal feats restricted to men. The nun Lidia of Thessalonica, who received spiritual instruction from Abbot Macarius in Egypt, won renown as ‘a scribe writing books and living in great asceticism in the manner of men’, whilst St Melania the Younger (d. 439) engaged in solitary copying of scripture and *lectio divina*.⁵⁶ There is also significant evidence for Merovingian and Insular nuns acting as scribes.⁵⁷ In accordance with the teachings of Cassiodorus

⁵² Brown, ‘*In the Beginning Was the Word*’ and *Lindisfarne Gospels*.

⁵³ Brown, ‘*In the Beginning Was the Word*’ and *Lindisfarne Gospels*, and Gameson, *The Scribe Speaks?*

⁵⁴ Walter E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca from the Collection of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and Others* (London, 1912), p. 10, no. 37.

⁵⁵ Recounted by Alexander the Monk around 750–66 in the *Laudatio Barnabae*, in *Hagiographica Cypria*, ed. by P. van Deun (Turnhout, 1993), p. 116. This and other interesting related accounts are mentioned in Rapp, ‘Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes’, pp. 208–09. However, her suggestion that the St Cuthbert Gospel was copied by the saint himself, or by his master Boisil, is unlikely given the nature of the uncial script, which is that practised at Wearmouth/Jarrow at the end of the seventh century rather than the half-uncial that was favoured by houses such as Melrose and Lindisfarne.

⁵⁶ For St Macarius, see the English translation by Edward C. Butler, *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, 2 vols in 1 (Cambridge, 1898), I, 150; for St Melania, see the English translation by Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger* (New York, 1984), p. 46. See also Rapp, ‘Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes’, pp. 209–11.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the evidence for Insular female scribal activity, see Brown, ‘Female Book-Ownership and Production’. For the wider Early Christian context for female literacy, see Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literacy* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 48–49, 130–31.

and others, such scribes became evangelists and — by study, contemplation, and meditation upon the text (*ruminatio*, *contemplatio*, and *meditatio*) — might actually glimpse the divine (*revelatio*).⁵⁸

Columbanus (c. 543–615) wrote that nature was a revelation, to be ‘read’ alongside Scripture to deepen our knowledge of God.⁵⁹ An affinity with nature and the opportunities it affords for solitary contemplation and communion with the divine are a distinctive feature of the ‘Celtic’ response to Christianity, stimulated by prehistoric tradition and the hagiographical visionary experiences of the desert fathers, who also sought spiritual encounter in the wilderness. Such concerns also pervade the *vitae* of Insular saints such as Cuthbert, Fursey, and Guthlac. St Paul and St Anthony, their visionary models, are depicted on eremitic retreat on sculptures from Pictland and Ireland, along with paradisiacal landscapes featuring palm trees and ostriches, as on the ninth-century cross-slab at Fowlis Wester, Perthshire (Figure 1), and the eighth-century North Cross at Ahenny, Munster. They are also depicted on the Ruthwell Cross, a Northumbrian-inspired monument erected on British soil (at Rheged, in south-western Scotland).

Along with other aspects of Celtic eremitic monasticism inherited from the East, some of the communities producing the great Insular sacred manuscripts may have adopted something of the Syro-Palestinian monastic tradition of semi-eremitic *lavras* (clusters of cells for hermits) whose members came together for communal worship but lived separately as quasi-anchorites.⁶⁰ This is especially apparent when we take account of remote outposts such as Skellig Michael off the south-west coast of Ireland, where the monks’ seventh-century beehive cells cling to a rock in the wild Atlantic in emulation of eastern high places such as Mount Sinai. This eastern eremitic impulse was not an exclusively Celtic taste, as the lives of St Cuthbert and St Guthlac attest. During feats of eremitic scribal endeavour the gospel book became the scribal desert (Old Irish *dísert*) and, via the ‘desert’

⁵⁸ Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, pp. 397–99.

⁵⁹ For the writings of Columbanus, see Thomas O’Fiaich, *Columbanus in his Own Words* (Dublin, 1974).

⁶⁰ Such communities were praised by Cassian, who acknowledged the eremitic tradition as a higher calling. On the remains of such monasteries, see Michael Herity, ‘The Buildings and Layout of Early Irish Monasteries before the Year 1000’, *Monastic Studies*, 14 (1983), 247–84, and Herity, ‘Early Irish Hermitages in the Light of the Lives of St Cuthbert’, in *St Cuthbert: His Cult and his Community*, ed. by Gerald Bonner and others (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 45–63. See also Michael Herity, *Studies in the Layout, Buildings and Art in Stone of Early Irish Monasteries* (London, 1995).



Figure 1. Pictish cross-slab, Church of St Bean's, Fowlis Wester, Perthshire, Scotland.
Ninth century.

islands of Britain and Ireland, influences from the Middle East, where the Bible was born, were transmitted to the West alongside the influences of Rome.

The visual appearance of Insular scriptures evinces concern for unity and avoidance of schism, apparent in the careful balancing of iconic and aniconic features at a time when iconoclasm was rife. The Lindisfarne Gospels' evangelist miniatures sit like framed icons on the page, portraying aspects of Christ's nature obliquely through their symbolism. Texts are introduced by exquisite cross-carpet pages, indebted to Coptic art and recalling the *Crux Gemmata* (the jewelled cross, symbol of the Second Coming) and the prayer mats (*oratorio*) sometimes used in northern Europe — including Northumbria — at this time as well as in the Middle East.⁶¹ These, standing at the entrance to the 'holy ground' of sacred text, may have been intended to evoke the eastern prayer mat, while the facing incipits explode in a riot of ornament (Plate I), as in aniconic Judaic and Islamic calligraphy, the letters themselves celebrating the divine.

Sculptured crosses upon slabs may also be related to the cross-carpet pages in Insular gospel books. Funerary name-stones, such as the Osgyth pillow-stone from Lindisfarne (Lindisfarne Priory Museum) and carved slabs, as at Tullylease, Aberlemno (Figure 2) and Clonmacnoise, resemble Coptic counterparts, such as London, British Museum, EA 1801 from fifth- to sixth-century Egypt, and Armenian khatchk'ars (Figure 3) which stand as sentinel saints (like the high crosses of Iona), marking burials or places of embarkation on a journey (like the Hilton of Cadboll and other Rosshire Pictish slabs).⁶²

During the early seventh century the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday was introduced to Rome, under influence from Constantinople, and was celebrated on 14 September (when Jerusalem celebrated the finding of the True Cross). In 614 the Persians had captured Jerusalem and the relic of the True Cross. Emperor Heraclius regained that precious item in 628 and restored it to Jerusalem

⁶¹ Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, pp. 312–30, and Michelle P. Brown, 'The Cross and the Book: The Cross-Carpet Pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels as "Sacred Figuræ"', in *Cross and Cruciform in the Anglo-Saxon World: Studies to Honor Timothy Reuter*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer, Karen Louise Jolly, and Catherine E. Karkov (Morgantown, 2010), pp. 17–52.

⁶² Particularly fine examples include the khatchk'ar at Goshavank, dated 1291, and the khatchk'ar of Aputayli, dated 1225, now in the British Museum, MME 1977, 5-5.1; see Michelle P. Brown, *The Lion Companion to Christian Art* (Oxford, 2008), p. 49. The Lindisfarne and Harlepool name-stones resemble Coptic counterparts in size, shape, and cross-motifs; see Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 317. London, British Museum, EA 1801 is reproduced in Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, fig. 142, p. 321.



Figure 2. Pictish cross-slab, Aberlemno Kirkyard, Angus, Scotland. Seventh or eighth century.



Figure 3. Khatchk'ar (memorial stone), Goshavank Monastery, Armenia. AD 1291.

in 629, but in 635 it was transferred for safety to Constantinople, its triumphant entry — the imperial *aduentus* — becoming the focus there of the feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-creating Cross (celebrated on 14 September).⁶³ This eventually developed into the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. By the mid-seventh century, when Anglo-Saxon pilgrims began visiting Rome, a Mass for the exaltation of the Cross was already in use, with prayer mats used when kneeling to kiss the cross.⁶⁴ As we have seen, carpet pages may recall such prayer mats, which still feature in the rituals of the Christian Orient and Islam. There is also physical evidence for stational crosses being set up at Lindisfarne, and there are references within the lives of St Cuthbert to pilgrims undertaking the ‘turas’ — the Irish pilgrimage round — of the ‘holy places’ there, in accordance with existing Irish tradition and more recent liturgical observances introduced from Rome via Wearmouth/Jarrow, ultimately reflecting those of Early Christian Jerusalem.⁶⁵

The varied forms of cross embedded within the Lindisfarne Gospels’ carpet pages — Latin, Greek, Celtic ring-head, and Coptic/Ethiopic Tau (Plate I) — also reflect ecumenical collaboration. Such visual devices would have served to reinforce the Gregorian ideal, emphasized by Bede, of diversity within unity.⁶⁶ The Cross would therefore stand as a potent symbol of the all-embracing ecumen, transcending manmade divisions.⁶⁷ Above all, however, these cross-carpet pages embody the *Crux Gemmata*, the symbolic representation of the Godhead by means of abstract,

⁶³ Paul L. van Tongeren, ‘Vom Kreuzritus zur Kreuzestheologie’, *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 112 (1998), 215–45 (pp. 243–45).

⁶⁴ As shown by a late eighth-century *ordo* adapted from Roman use for use north of the Alps — Ordo XXIV, parts 29–31. See Michel Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Âge*, 5 vols (Leuven, 1931–61), III: *Les Textes (suite): Ordines XIV–XXXIV* (1951), p. 293.

⁶⁵ See three studies by Éamonn Ó Carragáin: ‘A Liturgical Interpretation of the Bewcastle Cross’, in *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: Studies in Honour of Basil Cottle*, ed. by Myra Stokes and Tom L. Burton (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 15–42; *The City of Rome and the World of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 1994); and *Ritual and the Rood*. On early Irish pilgrimage rounds, see Herity, ‘Buildings and Layout of Early Irish Monasteries’. On archaeological and textual evidence, see Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, chap. 1.

⁶⁶ Ó Carragáin, *City of Rome*, pp. 26–27; Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 321; Brown, ‘The Cross and the Book’.

⁶⁷ Ó Carragáin, *City of Rome* and *Ritual and the Rood*. On the principle of the all-embracing ecumen, see Arnold Angenendt, *Der Memorial- und Liturgiecodex von San Salvatore/Santa Giulia in Brescia* (Hannover, 2000), pp. 295–303, and Éamonn Ó Carragáin, ‘The Necessary Distance: “Imitatio Romae” and the Ruthwell Cross’, in *Northumbria’s Golden Age*, ed. by Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 191–203 (pp. 201–03).

symbolic substitution, as had been favoured in the early Christian tradition. Such substitution had already proven especially valuable in the debate concerning iconoclasm. The *Crux Gemmata* and the gospel book serve as the embodiment of Christ in the fifth-century mosaics of the Orthodox Baptistry in Byzantine Ravenna, occupying throne and altar as proxies for Christ and as symbols of orthodoxy.⁶⁸ These were very much live issues, and even though a greater tolerance towards images prevailed in the West, that attitude did not go unquestioned, and debate continued into the Carolingian age.

Residual unease may be detected in the Insular preference for oblique, symbolic meaning rather than direct iconic representation of the Godhead. In 692 the Council *in Trullo*, held in Constantinople, passed a canon (no. 11) rejecting the established symbolic iconography of John the Baptist, the 'Precursor', pointing to the image of Christ as the Lamb in favour of a more literal representation of the Crucifixion as an image of redemption. This move contributed to an unease that erupted in 726 when the iconoclast party in Constantinople tore down the effigy of Christ on the palace gate and replaced it with a cross.⁶⁹ The Pope refused to subscribe to the Council, perhaps accounting for the prominent retention of the John the Baptist imagery on the Insular Ruthwell and Bewcastle Crosses, but there appears to have been an initial western move in favour of depicting the Crucifixion as the Council advocated, as is seen in the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion miniature (Plate II).⁷⁰ Such overt figural visual imagery seems to have been subsequently toned down as tension escalated in the East, resulting in the subtler aniconic imagery of the Lindisfarne Gospels. An icon from the Mediterranean area, or a

⁶⁸ Evangelos Chrysos, 'The Gospels on the Throne', in *Le Saint et le Sacré*, ed. by Alain Dierkens (unpublished conference proceedings).

⁶⁹ Brown, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, p. 2. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 15 vols (Paris, 1907–53), III.2 (1914), 3083; see also the general discussion here of the Cross. The iconoclast party replaced the Crucifix with a cross accompanied by a plaque which read as follows, in modern English translation: 'The Emperor Leo and his son Constantine | Thought it dishonour to the Christ divine | That on the very palace gate he stood | A lifeless, speechless effigy of wood. | Thus what the Book forbids they did replace | With the believer's blessed sign of grace.' See David Ayerst and Arthur S. T. Fisher, *Records of Christianity*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1971–77), II: *Christendom* (1977), p. 102; Brown, *In the Beginning Was the Word*, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Durham, MS A.ii.17, fol. 38^v. See Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie*, III.2, 3083, nn. 4 and 5; M. G. Millet, 'L'Iconoclastes et la Croix, à propos d'une inscription de Cappadoce', *Bulletin de Correspondence hellénique*, 34 (1910), 96–109; Eamonn Ó Carragáin and others, 'John the Baptist and the Agnus Dei: Ruthwell and Bewcastle Revisited', *Antiquaries Journal*, 81 (2001), 131–53.

manuscript miniature like the Rabbula Gospels,⁷¹ may have inspired the Durham Gospels' artist, whilst, a little later, Eadfrith favoured a more symbolic eastern approach to the Cross as sacred *figura* (symbolic diagram).

The presence of such Insular gospel books on the altar evoked the presence of God and celebrated the transmission of the gospels and their use in preaching and prayer. Pilgrims to St Cuthbert's shrine would have been greeted by the Lindisfarne Gospels' subtle blending of Celtic, Germanic, Pictish, Roman, Greek, and Middle Eastern ingredients. They would have been welcomed by familiar motifs from their own cultures, as woven into a harmonious, exotic synthesis embracing an ecumenical union that stretched from the deserts of Syria to the watery wildernesses of the West.

The palette of the earliest Insular and Frankish manuscripts, such as the Book of Durrow (see Plate VIIa), also emulates that of the East, especially Coptic Egypt, comprising red, green, and yellow (from red lead, verdigris, and orpiment).⁷² Decorative motifs are also shared, such as the ubiquitous interlace, the origins of which are variously ascribed to Germanic, Coptic, and northern Italian art, though all of these varied manifestations of interlace probably stem ultimately from the decoration that would have graced Roman mosaic floors from Hadrian's Wall to Tiberias.

An eastern Mediterranean appreciation of the iconic status of the book as an object of veneration was also transmitted to the West through the practice of enshrining sacred texts within 'treasure bindings' decorated with ivories or bejewelled metalwork plates attached to wooden binding boards. Such opulent bindings are found on Byzantine, Coptic, Armenian, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, Carolingian, and Ottonian books.⁷³ In Coptic Egypt and in Ireland, metalwork shrines (Old Irish *cumdach*) are also encountered.⁷⁴ The earliest surviving example (c. 600) of what may be a book-shrine forms part of the Coptic Treasure of Archbishop Abraham of Harmonthis (Cairo, Coptic Museum), whilst early treasure bindings are the gold and silver Sion Treasure book covers, made in Constantinople during the second half of the sixth century (Washington, DC, Dumbarton Oaks, inv. no. BZ

⁷¹ Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark*, no. 108.

⁷² Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, pp. 275–98 and Raman laser pigment analysis appendix, pp. 430–51.

⁷³ Important treasure bindings include the Lindau Gospels (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 644) and the Codex Aureus of Charles the Bald (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 14000). See *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, nos 66, 67, 74, and John Lowden, 'The Word Made Visible: The Exterior of the Early Christian Book as Visual Argument', in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. by Klingshirn and Safran, pp. 13–47.

⁷⁴ Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries of the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1994).

1963.36.8; Plate III).⁷⁵ Modifications to the original fifth-century binding of the Freer Gospels (Plate IV) in seventh-century Egypt included not only the painting of the original wooden binding-boards with encaustic wax images of the evangelists — thus transforming book into icon — but also the addition of metalwork that permanently locked the covers, enshrining the text within.⁷⁶ Lindisfarne's evangelist miniatures (Plate V) sit framed like icons, their backgrounds of thick pink paint burnished to emulate this encaustic icon technique. The covers of some early Coptic bindings resemble the cross-carpet pages of these books, with the sacrality of their texts reinforced by external protective symbols. This rendered them as efficacious closed as open. A late eighth-century Irish metalwork book-shrine from Lough Kinale, Co. Longford (Figure 4), likewise carries a design recalling carpet pages and was designed not to open.⁷⁷ Later in the Middle Ages an early Psalter written in Ireland, and long thought to be by St Columba's own hand, gained its name, the 'Cathach' (that is, the battler) of Columcille, from the fact that its hereditary keepers carried it, enshrined, before them into battle to ensure divine favour, a practice encountered earlier in Armenia where gospel books preceded armies into battle as a *palladium*, in place of the Byzantine icon.⁷⁸ The book had become one of the most powerful icons and talismans.

When the Irish Derrynaflan hoard of church plate was buried beneath a protective cauldron, during the ninth century, and the Faddan More Psalter (Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, 06E0786.13) was committed to the peat in its leather satchel (parallels for which occur in the Near East),⁷⁹ perhaps those persons responsible for these acts were seeking not only to conceal these items with a view to later retrieval, but also to save them from desecration by pagan raiders by giving them ritual burial, resembling deposit within Jewish genizahs and Near Eastern examples of book burials.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 212; for the Sion Treasure bindings, see *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, no. 67.

⁷⁶ Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art, MS F1906.274 and its covers, F1906.297 and F1906.298; see *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, nos 28–29.

⁷⁷ Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, 1986: 141; see Éamonn P. Kelly, 'The Lough Kinale Shrine: The Implications for the Manuscripts', in *The Book of Kells*, ed. by Felicity O'Mahony (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 280–89.

⁷⁸ Nersessian, *Armenian Illuminated Gospel Books*, p. 11.

⁷⁹ Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, 1980: 4, 5; Michelle P. Brown, 'Paten and Purpose: The Derrynaflan Paten Inscriptions', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, ed. by John Higgitt and Michael Spearman (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 162–67; Bernard Meehan, *The Faddan More Psalter* (Dublin, 2007).

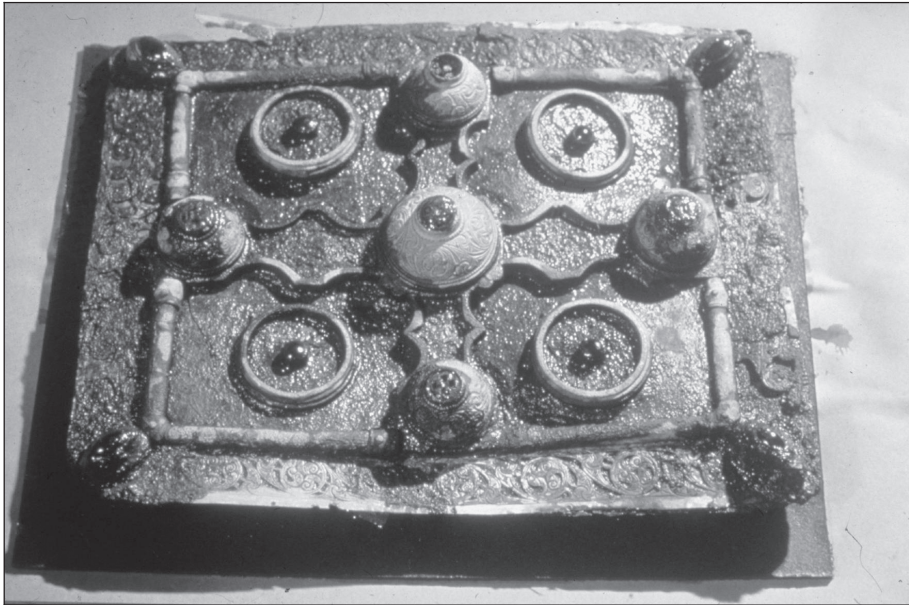


Figure 4. Irish metalwork book-shrine from Lough Kinale, Co. Longford. Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, 1986: 141. Late eighth century. Reproduced by permission of the National Museum of Ireland.

In addition to shared approaches to language, text, liturgy, and art, eastern codicological influences reached the Insular world. In eastern Mediterranean gospel books, each Gospel occupied its own gatherings, emphasizing originally distinct books by different authors.⁸⁰ The Gospels were also usually prefaced by one or more separate gatherings containing introductory matter. This distinctive codicological arrangement prevails in several Insular gospel books, including the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Barberini Gospels.⁸¹ Such front matter might include prefatory lists of Hebrew names — a particularly ‘Irish/Celtic’ feature.⁸² Old Latin

⁸⁰ Patrick McGurk, *Latin Gospelbooks from AD 400 to AD 800*, Publications de Scriptorium, 5 (Paris, 1961), pp. 6–7.

⁸¹ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Barberini lat. 570; see Michelle P. Brown, ‘The Barberini Gospels: Context and Intertextuality’, in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Eamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 89–116.

⁸² These also occur in the Durham Gospels and the Echternach Gospels (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 9389). See Christopher D. Verrey and others, *The Durham Gospels*, EEMF, 20 (Copenhagen, 1980).

versions featured Greek versions of these names, but Jerome brought them into line with Hebrew originals. His *Liber de Nominibus Hebraicis*, inspired by Philo and Origen, explained their meaning in both Testaments (in the manner that rabbinic tradition had done for the Old Testament).⁸³ It also addressed non-Hebrew speakers' concerns over correct pronunciation, given Hebrew's lack of vowels. This probably influenced Irish scholars who, intrigued by the new Latin literacy, were absorbed by phonetics.

Generally books were constructed from gatherings either sewn onto supporting leather bands — the Western technique — or unsupported, with only the sewing thread linking them together. The latter, 'Coptic sewing', was widely practised in eastern Mediterranean lands and en-

dures in Ethiopia. Gatherings were then contained within wooden boards that were often covered with decoratively tooled leather, a feature also encountered on the earliest extant Western binding, the Saint Cuthbert Gospel (Figure 5).⁸⁴ This



Figure 5. Saint Cuthbert Gospels upper cover, bound using the 'Coptic' technique, London, British Library, MS Loan 74, Wearmouth/Jarrow, 690s. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

⁸³ Lampe, *Cambridge History of the Bible*, p. 100.

⁸⁴ Formerly known as the Stonyhurst Gospel (London, British Library, Loan MS 74). See *The Stonyhurst Gospel of St John*, ed. by T. Julian Brown (Oxford, 1969); Berthe van Regemorter, *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Jane Greenfield (London, 1992).

was made in Wearmouth/Jarrow in the 690s using the 'Coptic' technique, mastery of its complexity providing tangible evidence of communication.

The Saint Cuthbert Gospel was found inside that saint's coffin in 1104 and was probably placed there in 698 when his relics were translated. On one end of the wooden coffin (known as a *theca*, or box, like the *bibliotheca* for storing books) is one of the earliest Western depictions of the Virgin and Child, resembling ultimately Egyptian effigies of Isis and Horus. When the Christian Copts moved into ancient temples, they applied new meanings to much of the imagery they encountered, influencing other eastern,⁸⁵ as well as Insular, churches. This iconography reappears in the Virgin and Child miniature in the Book of Kells (fol. 7^v) which also features *flabella* — the liturgical fans used to deter flies during the liturgy in eastern climes — and an exposed breast (similar to that in the sixth- or seventh-century fresco in the Coptic monastery of Deir-el-Suriani),⁸⁶ misunderstood as a stylized brooch. As on Cuthbert's coffin, it features a distinctive sideways view of the Virgin's body, her head turned frontally, the Child turning towards her in a 'complementary pose' reminiscent of 'Madonna of Tenderness' icons, as distinct from the Italo-Byzantine full-frontal pose.⁸⁷

Another ultimately eastern composition may be the *orans* posture of prayer, with hands upheld, as seen for example on the fifth-century Croatian Pola Casket.⁸⁸ This can be observed in early Insular works such as the Irish Bantry Bay carved slab. However, its currency earlier, within the Roman Empire, may have accounted for the diffusion of this prayer posture, rather than more contemporary eastern influence. The same posture is to be found, for example, in Roman Britain in the orientalizing frescoes from Lullingstone Villa, Kent.⁸⁹

Another iconographic borrowing is the Osiris pose seen in the St Luke miniature of the Lichfield Gospels (p. 218; Plate VI) and in the figure at the base of the Temple in the Temptation miniature of the Book of Kells (fol. 202^v). Both books are probably from the ultimately Columban *parochia* and feature figures with crossed arms holding rod and staff — attributes redolent of Egyptian pharaohs,

⁸⁵ Such as the Virgin and Child in a tenth-century Armenian gospel book, Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.537; see *In the Beginning*, ed. by Brown, no. 37.

⁸⁶ Illustrated in Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, fig. 123.

⁸⁷ The pose is discussed in Henry, *Book of Kells*, pp. 186–88.

⁸⁸ The Pola Casket from Pula is now in the Venice Archaeological Museum. See Brown, *Lion Companion to Christian Art*, p. 35.

⁸⁹ Now in the British Museum; see Brown, *Lion Companion to Christian Art*, pp. 30–31.

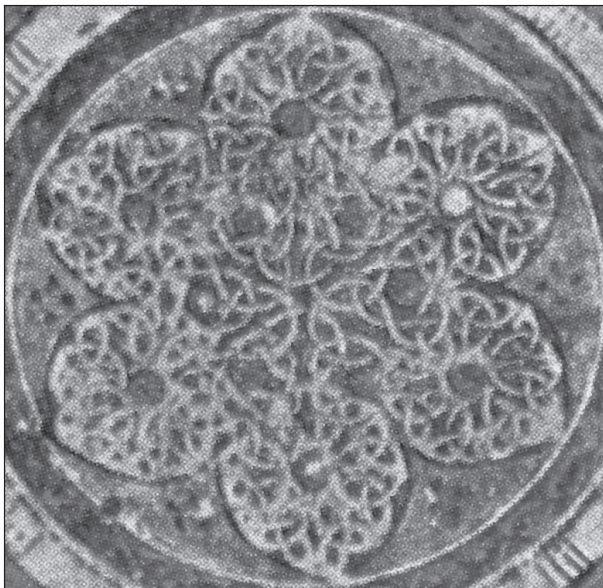


Figure 6. Arabesque ornament of a six-pointed star infilling the bow of 'h' introducing Luke 4, from the Book of Kells. Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 58, fol. 203^r (detail). Iona, c. 800? Reproduced by permission of the Trinity College Library, Dublin.

Osiris as judge of the dead, and the pastoral Lord of the Psalms. The Kells Temptation miniature is also a schematic representation of the Communion of Saints (a doctrine promoted by eastern theologians such as Tertullian and Origen), in which the Osiris figure presides over the Church Expectant — the little figures awaiting resurrection — and symbolizes Christ's harrowing of hell.⁹⁰

Kells also features other eastern influences, such as the intricate arabesque six-pointed star infilling the bow of 'h' (fol. 203^r), introducing Luke 4 (Figure 6). The geometric principles underlying this design find a close analogy in later Islamic art, such as a silver-inlaid jewel casket, assigned probably from north-eastern Greater Persia around AD 1100 (now in the David Collection, Copenhagen), and there are analogies on Armenian khatchk'ars, as well (see Figure 3). These principles probably derive from earlier eastern designs. There are even places in Kells where the ornamental infill of borders and the rhythmic interlacing of display scripts recall

⁹⁰ Michelle P. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996), p. 114; Carol A. Farr, *The Book of Kells: Its Function and Audience* (London, 1997). The Osiris pose is discussed in Henry, *Book of Kells*, p. 191.

the calligraphic effect of kufic script. Given the attempt on a late eighth-century Mercian gold coin to copy Arabic inscriptions and Ethiopic motifs (see below), this comparison may not be entirely fanciful. Another motif perhaps ultimately indebted to ancient Egypt is the Durham Cassiodorus's King David, standing on a recumbent double-headed beast — in Christian iconography an allusion to Christ trampling or adored by the beasts — for the double-headed beast, too, is encountered in the Egyptian pantheon.⁹¹

More tangible, however, are the parallels between the highly stylized figures of St Matthew's symbol, the Man, in the Book of Durrow (Plate VIIa), and the Armenian Priest's Gospel that is dated to 966 but that reflects earlier sources (Plate VIIb).⁹² The shared palette and similar treatment of the chequered vestments — Durrow's being previously attributed to enamelwork influence — suggest that Durrow may have drawn on eastern models, as well as Insular metalwork, an impression reinforced by the exotic evangelist symbols of its four-symbols page. The St Jerome carpet-page that opens the Lindisfarne Gospels (fol. 2^v), too, evokes Near Eastern textiles, its archaizing ornament recalling St Jerome's sojourn in the Holy Land, whilst the stylized drapery of the Durham Gospels' Crucifixion miniature (fol. 38^v) and the Echternach Gospels' Matthew symbol (fol. 18^v) resemble that depicted on Coptic textiles, such as that in the treasury of St Kunibert's, Cologne.⁹³

The invisible presence of the gospel book inside St Cuthbert's coffin and in book-shrines was evidently of powerful significance. An earlier case of scripture included in a burial is the earliest surviving complete Coptic Psalter.⁹⁴ Around 400 it was lovingly placed open as a pillow beneath the head of an adolescent girl in a humble cemetery at Al-Mudil, near Oxyrhynchus. An ancient analogy, for both, might be the Egyptian practice of interring the Book of the Dead to aid the deceased's passage into the afterlife. The small bone peg used to unlock the Coptic psalter, shaped like the ancient Egyptian key of life, reinforces this connection.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B.II.30, fol. 172^v. Similar themes occur on a panel from St Catherine's Sinai, on the Anglo-Carolingian Goenels-Elderen ivory diptych, and on the Ruthwell Cross, where it is captioned 'bestiae et dracones cognoverunt in deserto salvatorem mundi' (the beasts and dragons knew in the desert the Saviour of the World).

⁹² Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 57; Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.537, fol. 2. I am deeply indebted to Jessica Miller for drawing this comparison to my attention.

⁹³ See Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, p. 382.

⁹⁴ Cairo, Coptic Museum, MS Lib. 6614; see Gabra, *Cairo: The Coptic Museum*.

⁹⁵ In Ethiopia, a short text, the Lefafa Sedq ('Bandlet of Righteousness'), is still often carried on the person throughout life, is read at one's funeral, and is buried with one.

The incorruptibility of Cuthbert's body — a visible sign of sanctity — also finds its closest analogies within the emerging contemporary cults of incorrupt eastern saints, such as St Bishoi in the Egyptian Wadi Natrun, whose body, clad in thick layers of vestments, can still be prodded by the faithful to assure themselves that he is with them still — literally as well as spiritually.

Insular litanies feature not only local saints and the 'universal' saints of western liturgy, but eastern saints, such as Basil, Paul, Anthony, Pachomius, and Ephrem,⁹⁶ whilst the ninth-century *Irish Martyrology of Oengus* includes a litany invoking 'Morfesseor do monchaib Egipr(e) in disiurt Uilaig' ('Seven monks of Egypt in Disert Uilaig').⁹⁷ The frequency of the place-name 'disert' in Ireland and areas of Irish influence in Scotland and Wales also probably recollects early foundations of eastern eremitic character. The marked Irish taste for apocryphal texts, such as the 'Book of Adam and Eve' composed in sixth- or seventh-century Egypt, and found in Europe only in the Irish *Saltair Na Rann*, may likewise indicate influences from the Christian and Gnostic Orient.⁹⁸

Prayers composed by St Ephrem the Syrian also appear in two early ninth-century Mercian prayerbooks from the West Midlands — the Book of Cerne and the Book of Nunnaminster — whilst another prayerbook also from the 'Tiberius Group', the Royal Prayerbook (Plate VIII), probably made by women for a female physician-nun, includes a zoomorphic initial featuring a 'senmurv' of Persian pedigree. This term refers to a hybrid combining elemental attributes of beasts, birds, and fish (see Figure 7).⁹⁹ In 773–74, King Offa of Mercia (757–96) had a gold mancus minted, modelled upon dinars of the Abbassid Caliph al-Mansur

⁹⁶ Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints* (London, 1991). See also Plummer, *Irish Litanies*.

⁹⁷ Seraphim, 'On the Trail of the Seven Monks', identifies the site as Dundisert, Crumlin, Co. Antrim.

⁹⁸ Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin, 1975).

⁹⁹ Prayers attributed to St Ephrem occur in the Book of Cerne (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ll.1.10), where he is named in the rubric of prayer no. 46 but is unspecified in prayer 45. Such prayers are also found in the Book of Nunnaminster (London, British Library, MS Harley 2965), which is elsewhere attributed to St Ephrem; see Brown, *Book of Cerne*, p. 141. For the senmurv initial, see the Royal Prayerbook (London, British Library, MS Royal 2.A.xx), fol. 17r. On these and other members of the Tiberius Group of Southumbrian manuscripts, see M. P. Brown, 'Mercian Manuscripts? The Tiberius Group and its Historical Context', in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. by Michelle Brown and Carol Ann Farr (London, 2001), pp. 278–94. The similar senmurv in Figure 7 occurs on a brass ewer from Iran, c. AD 800.

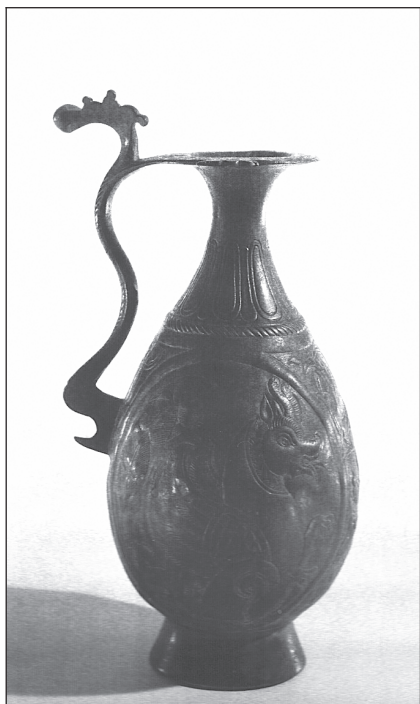


Figure 7. Senmurv (mythical bird) on a brass ewer. London, British Museum, Brook Sewell Fund 1959.10-23.1. Iran, c. 800.

minted that same year, featuring Offa's name alongside Allah's, along with motifs from the Ethiopic Aksumite culture (Figures 8a and 8b).¹⁰⁰

The orientalizing tastes of Offa's court also find expression at Breedon-on-the-hill, Leicestershire (see Figure 9), in the royal Mercian heartland. Breedon retains a remarkable series of late eighth- and early ninth-century sculptures, including intricate architectural friezes incorporating centaurs, eastern birds and beasts, inhabited vine-scrolls, and Syrian hunting scenes.¹⁰¹ Lichfield Cathedral, temporarily elevated by Offa to the status of archbishopric, boasts a newly excavated polychrome angel sculpture (Plate IXa), probably part of a refurbishment of the shrine of St Chad undertaken c. 800, that is related to an early ninth-century angel at Breedon. The hellenizing style and pose of both pieces recall Byzantine counterparts, such as an Archangel Michael ivory carved in Constantinople in the mid-sixth century (British

¹⁰⁰ London, British Museum, CM, 1913, 12-13-1 (Offa mancus) and CM, 1860, 12-31-7 (al-Mansur dinar). Offa's gold coin and the Abbasid dinar of 773–74 (AH 156–57) are illustrated in Michelle P. Brown, *Painted Labyrinth: The World of the Lindisfarne Gospels* (London, 2003), p. 38. See Gareth Williams, 'Mercian Coinage and Authority', in *Mercia*, ed. by Brown and Farr, pp. 210–28; see pp. 218–19 and fig. 15.1, no. 19. Such Islamic coins circulated widely in Italy and the Mediterranean. See also Bent Juel-Jensen and Stuart Munro-Hay, 'Further Examples of Coins of Offa Inspired by Aksumite Designs', *Spink Numismatic Circular*, 102 (1994), 256–57. See also Gannon, *Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage*, and Oddy, 'Arab Imagery'.

¹⁰¹ Richard Jewell, 'Classicism of Mercian Sculpture', in *Mercia*, ed. by Brown and Farr, pp. 246–62. Eastern influence on Insular vine-scroll carving had also previously been noted, see Ernst Kitzinger, 'Anglo-Saxon Vine-Scroll Ornament', *Antiquity*, 10 (1936), 67–71 (p. 67), and Rosemary J. Cramp, *Early Northumbrian Sculpture* (Jarrow Lecture, 1965).

Figure 8a. Abbasid dinar of Caliph al-Mansur, Baghdad, AD 773–74. London, British Museum, CM, 1860, 12-31-7. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum.



Figure 8b. Dinar / mancus of King Offa of Mercia, AD 773–74, minted in Mercia copying an Abbasid model, with Offa's name next to that of Allah and Axumite script from Ethiopia. London, British Museum, CM, 1913, 12-13-1. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum.

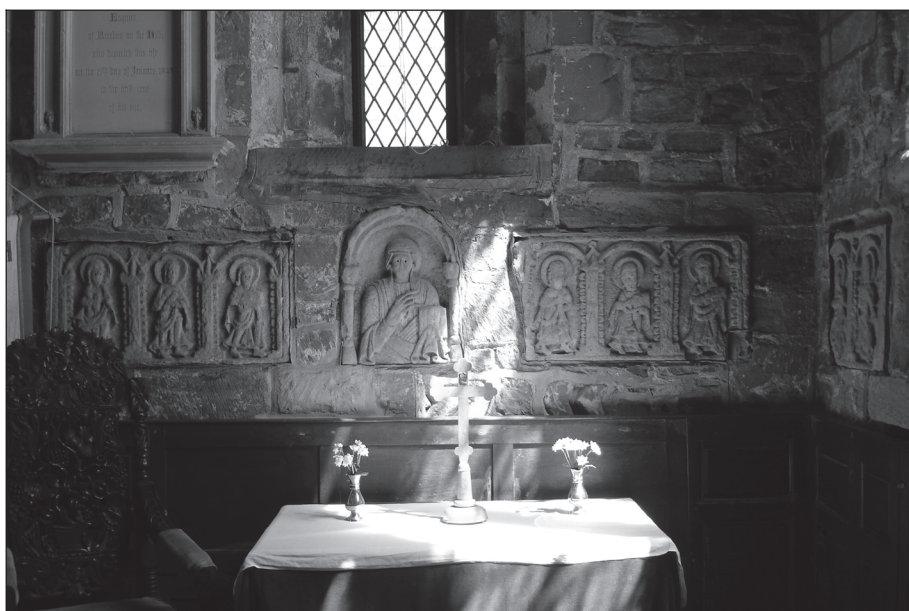


Figure 9. The Apostles and the Virgin in the iconic pose of *Hodegetria* (the Indicator of the Way), holding a book (instead of the Christ-child) as the embodiment of Logos, perhaps from an iconostasis screen. Breedon-on-the-hill, Leicestershire, c. 800.

Museum, E&PA OA 9999; Plate IXb).¹⁰² These Mercian sculptures are related to those from the great Mercian royal foundation of Peterborough (and its environs), where the Barberini Gospels was probably made c. 800, featuring painterly Byzantinizing bearded portraits of the evangelists.¹⁰³

Such works, with their overt visual references to imported luxury goods, graphically convey English aspirations concerning international mercantile, diplomatic, and ecclesiastic relations. Nor was this a new phenomenon: during the early seventh century, high-status Anglo-Saxon burials, such as those at Sutton Hoo and Prittlewell, incorporated Byzantine and Coptic artefacts alongside those from Italy, Gaul, the Germanic homelands, and the Celtic regions.

Insular sacred spaces might also occasionally incorporate features recalling Near Eastern church interiors. Seventh-century lives of St Brigid of Kildare (d. c. 525) mention an eastern-style iconostasis screen and a wooden partition dividing her church into separate prayer halls for men and women, as in the Christian Orient.¹⁰⁴ At Breedon a series of stone panels survives from c. 800 that may have formed part of an iconostasis screen.¹⁰⁵ One of these panels depicts the Virgin in the iconic pose of *Hodegetria*, the Indicator of the Way (see Figure 9).¹⁰⁶ Here, however, Mary

¹⁰² See Brown, *Lion Companion to Christian Art*, p. 45.

¹⁰³ Brown, 'The Barberini Gospels'. Another eminently portable model, a seventh-century Byzantine silk in the Vatican Museum, features the Annunciation, the seated Virgin hailed by a standing angel resembling those at Lichfield and Breedon, and, further north, at Hovingham and Wirksworth.

¹⁰⁴ On the *Vita I* of St Brigid, perhaps composed by Aileran the Wise of Clonard (d. 665) and the *Vita II* written by Cogitosus around 650, see Richard Sharpe, 'Vitae S. Brigitae: The Oldest Texts', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 81–106. See Brown, *How Christianity Came to Britain and Ireland*, pp. 92–94.

¹⁰⁵ Icons were usually designed to be displayed on stands (as diptychs or triptychs), carried in liturgical processions, or set upon liturgical iconostasis screens — the partition separating the holy of holies from the body of the church, which was covered with a series of icons. References to icons escalate from the fifth century, and by the sixth century icons of Christ and the apostles occurred on the *templon* barrier surrounding the sanctuary at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople; stone reliefs depicting them survive from the sixth-century church of St Polyeuktos in the same city. The initial low chancel screen thus gave way to the Middle Period *templon* barrier and then to the Late Byzantine *iconostasis* — a full sanctuary screen carrying an established scheme of icons forming a symbolic cosmos.

¹⁰⁶ I am deeply indebted to Jane Hawkes for valuable discussion on this point.

holds a book instead of the Christ-child as the physical embodiment of the Logos, visibly demonstrating the Insular perception of the gospel book as an icon.¹⁰⁷

The Lough Kinale book-shrine (see Figure 4) eloquently demonstrates the iconic status acquired by the book by the late eighth century. Nonetheless, that shrine was tossed into an Irish lake during the ninth century when a disappointed Viking raider found that it contained only an old book¹⁰⁸ — a challenge to the iconic status of sacred texts by ‘outsiders’ who did not belong to the Abrahamic religions, preferring the old gods of the North.

Eastern influence, transmitted to the West by a number of routes, had helped in the interim to revolutionize society’s perceptions of the role and appearance of the book, which endures still as one of our greatest cultural icons on the threshold of the electronic age. The routes along which such influences travelled have been hotly debated, and there has been an understandable caution in assuming direct points of contact. As I have sought to demonstrate in this paper, a variety of circumstances might prevail. Some of the correspondences between eastern and western ecclesiastical practices and perceptions that echo down the centuries are likely to have been purely coincidental — parallel cultural manifestations, some stimulated by an ultimate common point of reference. Some of the eastern influences detectable in insular church culture would appear, on the other hand, to have reached Britain and Ireland indirectly, via Italy, Gaul, and Spain. Other such influences, however, are less readily attributable to such cultural intermediaries and, given the growing body of evidence that I have rehearsed here, would seem to have resulted from direct *prima facie* contact between the Near East and these far western isles of Europe.

¹⁰⁷ The eleventh-century Christ in Majesty sculptured panel at Barnack, near Peterborough, might also conceivably have formed part of such a screen.

¹⁰⁸ Kelly, ‘The Lough Kinale Shrine’.

THE *WIP DWEORH* CHARMS IN MS HARLEY 585: A UNION OF TEXT AND VOICE

Katherine E. Lynch

Old English charms resist easy classification.¹ They are found in over twenty manuscripts that vary widely in date, content, and provenance.² Some are translations of Latin remedies, while others are native to Britain and have no known Latin source. Most are composed in prose, but some include metrical elements.³ Moreover, the kinds of acts that a charm requires its practitioner to undertake can vary widely. Lori-Ann Garner describes some of the variance found in the charms as follows: 'Some of the charms [...] include lengthy incantations

I would like to thank the following individuals for their insights, advice, and encouragement while I was in the process of preparing this paper: Brian O'Camb, Thom Dancer, Matthew Hussey, John D. Niles, and A. N. Doane.

¹ The noun 'charm' has been used for decades as an umbrella term for several different kinds of Old English texts. It comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *cirm*, which the *DOE* (s.v.) defines as a 'noise, (loud) sound'. Etymologically, therefore, a *charm* refers to an aural act or event — something that is perceived by the ear. The word as we currently know it, however, has taken on a much larger semantic range. The *OED* initially defines *charm* as 'the chanting or recitation of a verse supposed to possess magic power or occult influence', but adds that charms can also be 'material thing[s] credited with such properties'. These definitions are appropriate to the Old English texts that we call 'charms', for these texts include both speech acts and instructions for nonverbal rituals, as well as reference to talismanic objects.

² Felix Grendon, *Anglo-Saxon Charms* (New York, 1909; repr. Folcroft, PA, 1974), p. 56, lists twenty-two manuscripts that contain charms in Old English, but this number is subject to adjustment depending on how one defines a charm.

³ Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (*The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR, 6 (New York, 1942)), argues that 'there are only twelve [charms] which are in metrical form or which contain verse passages of sufficient regularity to warrant their inclusion in an edition of Anglo-Saxon poetry' (p. cxxx).

with no directions for performance or even a title indicating a clear purpose. Others include elaborate ritual instructions with no verbal element.⁴ The fact that these two kinds of texts can occur in manuscripts side by side indicates that for their compilers, their function was more important than their form or their methods of healing. Indeed, the only quality shared by Anglo-Saxon charms is that they have — or are perceived to have — the power to achieve specific desired effects, whether by direct or indirect influence.⁵ Because charms point towards extratextual events in the world, Lea Olsan distinguishes them from other kinds of Anglo-Saxon texts: ‘unlike epic poetry, riddles, or lyrics, charms are performed toward specific practical ends [...]. Their mode of operation is performative.’⁶ Every charm is thus necessarily a performance, or ‘text-event’, in the words of Paul Zumthor. Charms are not meant to be read silently, or even simply read aloud; they are meant to be enacted. They are ‘text[s]-in-action’.⁷

This essay discusses three charms directed ‘wip̃ dweorh’ that are found in the *Lacnunga*,⁸ a diverse compilation of Anglo-Saxon remedies and prayers comprising fols 130^r–193^r of London, British Library, MS Harley 585, written in the early

⁴ Lori Ann Garner, ‘Anglo-Saxon Charms in Performance’, *Oral Tradition*, 19 (2004), 20–42 (p. 21).

⁵ While many charms are directed towards the health or well-being of an individual (the main charm discussed in this chapter being a prime example), others, such as the charm for unfruitful land, work to improve the human condition by positively affecting the outside world. Because of this emphasis, charms are close in genre to prayers. However, they are crucially distinct from prayers as regards where they locate their source of power, as well as regards their rhetorical assurance. As L. M. C. Weston writes in ‘The Language of Magic in Two Old English Metrical Charms’, *Neu-philologische Mitteilungen*, 86 (1985), 176–86, ‘Where prayers ask humbly for divine intercession, charms act confidently to transfer power in a specific direction and to a specific purpose’ (p. 177).

⁶ Lea Olsan, ‘The Inscription of Charms in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, *Oral Tradition*, 14 (1999), 401–19 (p. 409).

⁷ Paul Zumthor, ‘The Impossible Closure of the Oral Text’, *Yale French Studies*, 67 (1984), 25–42.

⁸ The name *Lacnunga* (‘Remedies’, from the OE word *lācning* or *lēcning*; cf. OE *lēcdōm* ‘medicine’) is not found in London, British Library, MS Harley 585 itself; rather, Thomas Cockayne assigned this title to the collection in his *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England* (London, 1866), a book that obviously thrives on archaisms. N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), no. 231, dates most of this manuscript to ‘x/xi’ (that is, to about the turn of the millennium), while A. N. Doane, *Books of Prayers and Healing*, ASMMF, 1 (Tempe, 1994), holds that ‘the date of the manuscript as a whole should probably be pushed into the first decade of the 11c’ (p. 26).

eleventh century.⁹ I will argue here that in order to grasp the full performative range of these texts, not only should we examine their content, but we should also understand them as ‘text-events’ produced by a scribe in an Anglo-Saxon manuscript. First and foremost, Old English charms are snapshots of a process¹⁰ — the process of the scribe’s hand moving across skin in a specific locale at a specific time. This kind of work could not be more different from the mass-produced critical editions that dominate the academy today. A. N. Doane asserts that ‘the chirographic representation of text is [...] different from printed or mechanized text in that it retains some of the features of speech. Like an utterance each manuscript is unique and is the result of a somatic gesture’.¹¹ This relationship of the manuscript to human corporeality — to the actions of the scribe’s body — means that the physical reality of the medieval manuscript can be compared to an oral performance. By this I do not mean to suggest that every manuscript is necessarily a trace of a long-lost speech act, but rather that certain principles that have come to be associated with the oral mode also apply to texts written in early medieval manuscripts. As John Dagenais writes, ‘that most ephemeral of literary events, an oral performance, comes closest to imitating that solidly physical text we seek: in its uniqueness, in the impossibility of its iteration, in its vulnerability to accidents of time and environment.’¹² Both Doane and Dagenais thus argue for an Anglo-Saxon textuality that is defined in part by what modern scholars consider to be features of orality. Such an approach is particularly appropriate to the *dweorh* charms of the *Lacnunga*, whose texts routinely mix poetry with prose and rely on both written and voiced modes in order to effect change.

⁹ The first two charms ‘wip dweorh’ are found on fol. 165^r, while the third charm is found on fols 167^r–168^v.

¹⁰ Mary Swan uses this metaphor in her essay ‘Authorship and Anonymity’, in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford, 2001), pp. 71–83: ‘By contrast with a printed text, then, a single manuscript copy of a text could be said to resemble a snapshot of one moment in a textual evolution’ (p. 76). This notion of the ‘snapshot’ is what Paul Zumthor, ‘The Text and the Voice’, *New Literary History*, 16 (1984), 67–92, refers to as ‘a scrap of the past, immobilized in a space that is reduced to the page or the book’ (p. 71).

¹¹ A. N. Doane, ‘Editing Old English Oral/Written Texts: Problems of Method (with an Illustrative Edition of Charm 4, *Wið fæstlice*)’, in *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. by D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 125–45 (p. 130).

¹² John Dagenais, ‘That Bothersome Residue: Toward a Theory of the Physical Text’, in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, 1991), pp. 246–59 (p. 255).

Charm 3 in the Context of MS Harley 585

The most famous of the *dweorh* charms is headed *Charm 3* in Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie's edition of *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*. In the manuscript, *Charm 3* has no title and begins 'Wið *dweorh* ...'. It starts in prose on fol. 167^r, then continues in alliterative verse beginning near the end of the first line of fol. 168^v. The manuscript does not signal or mark this shift in any way, but in the latest edition of the *Lacnunga*, Edward Pettit — like other editors before him — divides the charm into two sections.¹³ He defends this practice by citing 'the distinct rhythmic and alliterative aspect of lines 650–58'¹⁴ as well as the prose section's reference to 'þæt galdor þæt heræfter cweð' (the song that is quoted hereafter). The metrical component of this particular charm has made it the subject of close attention, so that it has been excerpted into volumes of Anglo-Saxon verse and read and interpreted as poetry. However, *Charm 3* is not the only text in the *Lacnunga* that is headed *wið dweorh*. Two other, much shorter remedies for *dweorh* also appear in this collection, one directly after the other on fol. 165^r, only two folios before *Charm 3*. Both consist only of prose. Despite the three charms' relative proximity in the manuscript, no one has yet read them together.

Most of the scholarship on *Charm 3* has focused on its enigmatic subject, the illness known as *dweorh*, with the intent of deciphering the nature of this malady. *Charm 3* has thus been treated more like a riddle in need of a solution than as a performance.¹⁵ This paper will present a new approach to *Charm 3*, particularly as

¹³ As A. N. Doane reminds us in his essay 'Spacing, Placing and Effacing: Scribal Textuality and Exeter Riddle 30 a/b', in *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 45–65, by typographically isolating Anglo-Saxon lines written in alliterative verse, a modern edition distances itself from the physical reality of its text: 'The main function of editorially imposed metrical markers is visual and appropriative. The typography proclaims that this text is now edited, now "ours" not "theirs", that it is broken from its wild state; that despite its poor matter it is indeed "poetry" and that it is now fit for silent reading and individual study. It confirms one's sense of control over the text by wresting it from the textuality of the manuscripts' (p. 49).

¹⁴ *Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms, and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: The Lacnunga*, ed. by Edward Pettit, 2 vols (Lewiston, NY, 2000), II, 180.

¹⁵ In the *DOE* (s.v. *dweorg*). In six Anglo-Saxon glossaries, 'dweorh', glossing Latin 'nanus', is taken to mean 'dwarf'. It is taken to mean 'fever' in five texts relating to sickness or healing. However, in only one of those instances is the word tied to Latin 'febris'. While the linguistic evidence for 'dweorh' as 'fever' is therefore spotty, Pettit (*Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, II, 176) discusses the meaning of *dweorh* in the three charms of the *Lacnunga* and takes the word to denote 'fever'. Possibly the term refers to high fever of the kind that can render a person delirious or unconscious,

regards the mythological narrative that is incorporated into that cure. In addition, I will contend that the combined evidence of the three *dweorh* charms in MS Harley 585 is emblematic of the complicated relationship between vocality and textuality in pre-Conquest England.

Integral to the comprehension of any Anglo-Saxon text is knowledge of its manuscript context.¹⁶ To ignore the fact that *Charm 3* is one of several ‘wip dweorh’ remedies in MS Harley 585 — to study only the last of these three texts as though it occurs in isolation — is to maintain a distinction between poetry and prose that is not observed within the manuscript. For a full description of MS Harley 585, I refer readers to the first volume of the series *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile*. Table 1 illustrates the immediate manuscript context of the three ‘wip dweorh’ charms.

None of the texts in question is remarkable in terms of how it is presented in the manuscript. Both the first prose charm (fol. 165^r) and the metrical charm (fol. 167^r) are augmented slightly by decoration and figures, but not in a manner that suggests that particular importance should be given to one or the other. The capital *wynn* that begins the remedy on fol. 165^r is faintly embellished, but so is the one that begins the charm against wens at line 9. And the metrical charm on fol. 167^r is marked by a cross in the margin, but such figures appear with no discernable pattern throughout the manuscript. While scholars have been quick to excerpt *Charm 3*, therefore, MS Harley 585 itself does not privilege one text over another. The two prose ‘wip dweorh’ charms on fol. 165^r of MS Harley 585 resemble one

for ordinary fevers would not require such dramatic intervention as is witnessed in *Charm 3*, whose proscribed action extends over at least a three-day period. Later instances of the word reveal no trace of the sense ‘fever’. The *MED* (s.v. *dwergh*), for example, provides three definitions relating to persons of diminutive size, and a fourth definition of the word as a ‘term of disparagement’. Anatoly Liberman, in his *Analytic Dictionary of English Etymology* (Minneapolis, 2008), pp. 46–62, discusses the etymology of ‘dwarf’ at length, tracing that word’s reference to supernatural beings as well as its connection to insanity and dementia. In recognition of the linguistic uncertainty surrounding ‘dweorh’ as a medical malady, I will leave that word untranslated in this essay, which is not concerned with its precise clinical definition.

¹⁶ Fred C. Robinson reminds us of the importance of understanding a work’s manuscript context in ‘Old English Literature in its Most Immediate Context’, in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. by John D. Niles (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 11–29: ‘When we read an Old English literary text we should take care to find out what precedes it in its manuscript state and what follows it. We should know whether it is an independent text or part of another, larger text. We should have some sense of the poem’s *mise en page* and some conception of the manuscript as a whole. For medieval books often constituted composite artifacts in which each component text depended on its environment for part of its meaning’ (p. 11).

Table 1. The *dweorh* charms in MS Harley 585.

Folios	Description
163 ^v /9 – 164 ^r	Two remedies for hemorrhoids: ‘Gif se wyrm sý nyþer-gewend, oðð[e] se bledenda fic’ (If the ‘worm’ has turned downward, or bleeding piles).
164 ^v	Two remedies for inflammation: ‘gif fot oððe cneow oððe scancan swellan’ (if the foot or the knee or the shins swell) and ‘wið micclum lice ond bringc adle’ (against a swollen body and fever).
165 ^r /1–8	Two cures for <i>dweorh</i>, both of which begin, ‘Writ ðis ondlang ða earmas wiþ <i>dweorh</i>’.
165 ^r /9 – 166 ^v	Four remedies, one for swelling at the heart, two for black blains, and one for pains at the heart.
167 ^r –168 ^v /16	Another remedy ‘wið <i>dweorh</i>’. This charm contains both prose and verse elements and is Dobbie’s <i>Charm 3</i>.
168 ^v /16 – 172 ^v	Miscellaneous brief remedies beginning ‘Her syndon læce-domas wið ælces cynnes omu(m) ond onfeallu(m) [ond] bancopum’ (Here are remedies against all kinds of skin eruptions and diseases and illnesses).

another so closely that they may well be considered alternate versions of the same cure.¹⁷

- (a) Writ ðis ondlang ða earmas wiþ *dweorh*:
+ T + ωA. Ond gnid cyleðenigean on ealað; S(an)c(t)e Uictorici.
- (b) Writ þis ondlang ða earmas wið *dweorh*:
+ T + p + T + N + ω + T + UI + M + ωA. Ond gnid cyleþenigean on ealað; S(an)c(tu)s Macutus, S(an)c(t)e Uictorici.

The content of both charms is fairly straightforward if one skips over the question of what the symbols mean. The symbols are to be written — or inscribed, perhaps — along the arms of someone or something. The Old English term *earmas* most likely refers to the arms of the patient (or could it be to those of the practitioner?), but it is also possible that the arms in question are those of an object, such as a cross. Afterwards, the herb celandine is to be pounded or ground into ale. Presumably, this mixture would then be consumed by the patient, though no such instructions are given. For the purposes of this essay, I will assume that the patient’s

¹⁷ Cited from *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. by Pettit, I, 70. Here and elsewhere when quoting from this source, I expand the tyronian nota to ‘ond’. The two texts can be translated as follows: (a) ‘Write this along the arms against *dweorh*: + T + ωA. And grind celandine into ale. Saint Machutus, Saint Victorici’; (b) ‘Write this along the arms against *dweorh*: + T + p + T + N + ω + T + UI + M + ωA. And grind celandine into ale. Saint Machutus, Saint Victorici’.

body is the focus of both acts, so that the symbols are to be written on his or her arms and that he or she is to drink the herbal concoction.¹⁸

Two saints, Machutus and Victoricus, are then mentioned. St Machutus (or Macutus, or Malo), was a sixth- or seventh-century bishop who was well known and celebrated in England. An Old English translation of the *Vita sancti Machuti*¹⁹ attributes several miracles to the saint, including his healing of people possessed by devils. Miracles of this kind are of obvious relevance to a charm that may be directed against a severe fever, particularly when the fever seems to be caused by a malignant creature (as seems to be true in this case, as we shall see). As for St Victorius, he was a fourth-century martyr who suffered persecution under Emperor Diocletian; his significance here may thus be that he stands in for all those who have ultimately triumphed over physical torment. His name appears in a litany from Reims dating from the ninth century.²⁰ While these allusions to St Machutus and St Victorius are therefore intelligible in this context, the role of these names in the execution of the charm is unclear. The texts do not specify whether the names should be written out or whether these two saints should be invoked orally. In any event, it is likely that the words ‘S(anctus) Macutus, S(an)c(t)e Uictorici’ are glosses on the letters ‘UI + M’.

The symbols have been interpreted in various ways. Many scholars read them as the precise graphemes that should be inscribed on the patient’s body, very likely serving as abbreviations — though for exactly what, there is no agreement. Godfrid Storms suggests that ‘*T* may stand for Trinity, *p* for pater, *N* for nomen,²¹ *UI* for Victorius, *M* for Macutus. The Greek letters A and O stand for God’.²² If *UI* and *M* do indeed stand for Victorius and Macutus, respectively, then the names of both saints at the end of each string of symbols could be read as an explanation on the part of the scribe or composer of the charms, who may have felt that the other

¹⁸ The patient’s body is a frequent focal point of the charms included in MS Harley 585. One example among many is the *Nine Herbs Charm*, whose practitioner is to sing a *galdor* ‘in þone muð ond in þa earan buta ond on ða wunde’ (into the mouth and into both ears and into the wound); *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. by Pettit, I, 68.

¹⁹ See *The Old English Life of Machutus*, ed. by David Yerkes (Toronto, 1984).

²⁰ Following Michael Lapidge, Pettit indicates that the litany ‘may have been brought to England by the monk Grimbold of Flanders when he was invited over by King Alfred to assist in improving the state of the ecclesiastical order’ (*Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, II, 168–69).

²¹ Pettit (*Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, II, 169) adds, ‘presumably, as usual, the “name” of the patient’.

²² Godfrid Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague, 1948), p. 282. Alternatively, ‘P’ and ‘N’ may stand for ‘pater’ and ‘noster’ respectively, while ‘T’ may represent the Cross.

symbols — *T, p*, etc. — were all intelligible to the audience and did not need clarification. By implying that their readers — or listeners — do not need explicit instructions about how to use these holy names and how to interpret the chain of symbols, the prose *dweorb* charms make a move that is often associated with the oral mode. Rather than existing as a closed referential space, each of these charms relies on external factors to create meaning. They are texts that, in the words of Zumthor, ‘lean toward setting [themselves] up as common property of the group at whose center [they] function’.²³

Although these two prose remedies ‘retain some of the features of speech’ (to return to A. N. Doane’s formulation), their bias is towards the text rather than the voice. By investing the act of inscription with curative power, these charms demonstrate a clear privileging of the visual versus the oral/aural mode. In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter J. Ong contends that in cultures transitioning from the ‘oral’ to ‘literate’ states ‘writing is often regarded at first as an instrument of secret and magic power’.²⁴ Eleventh-century England was certainly such a culture, for while enclaves of considerable learning existed in episcopal centres and monasteries, most persons at this time were surely illiterate. The prose *dweorb* charms rely upon an implicit understanding of writing as a source of power; in addition, they exploit this power through their use of symbols that are obviously associated with a kind of magical potency. L. M. C. Weston has defined a ‘magical act’ as having ‘two main parts, the first gathering or creating the power or force to be expended in the second’.²⁵ With this distinction in mind, I suggest that we read these prose charms as instructing the practitioner to expend the magical force contained in the symbols through the act of writing. Like the scribe of a manuscript, a practitioner of these charms must inscribe the symbols on skin — on the *earmas* of the patient. But unlike the scribe, whose mission is to record the charm so that it can be performed at a later date, the practitioner’s act of inscription expends whatever magical force is perceived to reside within the symbols.

The symbols have additional interest as the only textual element that varies from the first charm to the second. Here, MS Harley 585 presents us with an example of what we may call ‘textual *mouvance*’, in an adaptation of Paul Zumthor’s term for the ‘radical instability’ of oral poetry.²⁶ Pettit begins his brief commentary

²³ Zumthor, ‘The Text and the Voice’, p. 78.

²⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1982), p. 92.

²⁵ Weston, ‘Language of Magic’, p. 177.

²⁶ Zumthor, ‘Impossible Closure’, p. 31.

on these texts by stating that ‘it appears that essentially the same remedy is duplicated’.²⁷ It is indeed possible that the second charm is a revision of the first, and that the scribe accidentally omitted the seven middle symbols, proceeded on with the instructions about celandine and ale, and wrote down the names of the saints, only to realize in that moment that he had neglected to copy down the symbols UI and M corresponding to the names Macutus and Victoricus. Having realized his mistake, the scribe would then have had two options: to recopy the charm in its entirety, or to add in the missing symbols by means of superscript insertion. He is not reticent to use superscript in other places — the ‘d’ in ‘ondlang’ in the first prose *dweorh* charm is a superscript letter (fol. 165^r), and he resorts to superscript often in *Charm 3* (fol. 168^v), three folios later. If the second charm is a correction of the first, the fact that he does not resort to this technique in that portion of the first prose charm that introduces the string of symbols may indicate that the symbols are not the kind of text that can, or should, be abbreviated in any way — that there is one and only one ‘right’ version. Were this the case, these prose charms would be evidence not of what A. N. Doane refers to as ‘a flow with indefinite gradations and indeterminacies’,²⁸ but of the necessity for precision and correctness in texts that yoke the act of inscription to magical power. Under this reading, the status of the writing in question as *symbolic* has the effect of creating what editors today would refer to as a ‘best’ text.

However, it is also possible that the second prose charm is not a correction of the first, but that they exist as a deliberate pairing.²⁹ The ordering of texts in the manuscript suggests that this may be the case. The four charms that precede the prose *dweorh* texts are actually two pairs: first is a pair of remedies for hemorrhoids (fols 163^v/9–164^r), and this is followed by a pair of remedies for swelling (fol. 164^v). The constituents of these two pairings are not nearly identical to each other, and thus

²⁷ *Anglo-Saxon Remedies*, ed. by Pettit, II, 168. If the second charm is a rewrite of the first, then we have here a text-event that has an analogue in the Exeter Book, in which the scribe copied the same riddle twice — numbered 30*a* and 30*b* by Krapp and Dobbie — once on fol. 108^r/9 and once on fol. 122^v/12. In his discussion of the slight lexical differences between the *a* and *b* texts, Doane, ‘Spacing/Placing’, concludes that ‘the Exeter scribe was in the habit of copying only approximately, that although he maintained a good sense of dialectal and orthographic consistency that reflected his exemplar as well as his own usage, when it came to it he was frequently content to copy *gists* rather than exact words, that is, he looked, he looked away, he listened, he recomposed’ (p. 63).

²⁸ Doane, ‘Editing Old English Oral/Written Texts’, p. 130.

²⁹ Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, p. 282, intriguingly suggests a practical reason for this pairing of the *dweorh* charms — that perhaps ‘a different version had to be written on the right and left arm’.

do not present us with the same questions that the two prose *dweorh* charms do. Still, the presence of three topical pairs in a row suggests that a clustering technique may be the guiding principle of *compilatio* here on the part of the scribe or anthologist.³⁰

Charm 3: *Voice and Text*

It is impossible to say why the metrical *dweorh* charm (fols 167^r–168^v) is separated (if only slightly) from the prose *dweorh* charms, especially since *Charm 3* shares the prose charms' interest in the restorative power of inscription. Unlike the preceding *dweorh* texts, however, it also emphasizes vocalization. In this charm, the acts of singing and writing converge in order to reinforce each other's effects:

Wið dweorh man sceal niman VII lytle oflætān, swylce man mid ofrað and writan þas naman on ælcra oflætān: Maximianus, Malchus, Iohannes, Martimianus, Dionisius, Constantinus, Serafion. Þanne eft þæt galdor, þæt her æfter cweð, man sceal singan, ærest on þæt wynstre eare, þanne on þæt swiðre eare, þanne bufan þæs mannes moldan. And ga þanne an mædenman to and ho hit on his sweoran, and do man swa þry dagas; him bið sona sel.

- Her com in gangan, in spiderwiht,
 (10) hæfde him his haman on handa, cwæð þæt þu his hæncgest wære,
 legde þe his teage an sweoran. Ongunnan him of þam lande liþan;
 sona swa hy of þam lande coman, þa ongunnan him ða liþu colian.
 Þa com in gangan dweores sweostar;
 þa geændade heo and aðas swor
 (15) ðæt næfre þis ðæm adlegan derian ne moste,
 ne þam þe þis galdor begytan mihte,
 oððe þe þis galdor ongalan cuþe. Amen. Fiað.³¹

[Against *dweorh*, one must take seven little sacramental wafers such as one makes offerings with, and write these names on each wafer: Maximianus, Malchus, Iohannes, Martimianus, Dionisius, Constantinus, Serafion. Then again, one must sing the charm that is quoted hereafter, first in the left ear, then in the right ear, then over the top of the person's head. And then a virgin should go and hang it on his neck, and one should do thus for three days. He will straightway be better. 'Here came walking in a spider-creature; he had his covering in his hand, he said that you were his steed, he laid his band on your neck. They started to travel from the land. As soon as they came from the land, their limbs began to cool. Then

³⁰ Doane's helpful list of contents in *Books of Prayers*, pp. 30–34, reveals several other clusters within the *Lacnunga*, including 'three charms against accidental ingestion of worms or poison', 'seven remedies for *þeor'*, and 'three charms for childbirth'.

³¹ *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, pp. 121–22. The lineation is Dobbie's.

the dwarf's sister came walking in. Then she settled the suit and swore oaths that this might never injure the sick one, nor anyone who was able to obtain this charm, or who knew how to sing this charm.' Amen, let it be so.]

This charm demands three kinds of performative acts from its practitioner. First is the act of inscription: seven names must be written onto wafers, which are presumably strung together, perhaps in a necklace. Second is a physical action: the set of wafers must be placed repeatedly (once every three days) around the neck of the patient. Third is an oral/aural performance: a *galdor*³² must be sung three times on each of three days, once into each ear and once over the patient's head.

While no distinction is made in the manuscript between the instructions and the *galdor* that follows it, most editors (like Dobbie) divide *Charm 3* into prose and verse components. The prose instructions are fairly straightforward. First, seven wafers that resemble those used in the sacrament of the Eucharist are to be inscribed, each with a name (or with a set of seven names; the instructions are not perfectly clear). These names refer to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, whose legend is featured in Gregory of Tours's *De gloria martyrum*.³³ These seven brothers sequestered themselves in a cave during the persecutions of the Roman emperor Decius and prayed that God would rescue them. While praying, they fell asleep. Decius, thinking to kill them, sealed up the cave. The brothers awoke many years later, during the reign of the Christian emperor Theodosius, and warned him not to give credence to the Sadducean heresy that there would be no resurrection of the dead.

It is likely that the Seven Sleepers are invoked in this charm from *Lacnunga* so as to call to mind the theme of bodily resurrection. Magennis notes that 'this element is centrally present in all the main versions of the legend and gives the miracle

³² In *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia, 1999), John D. Niles reminds us that *galdor* is a 'word whose semantic field is expressed by the modern English terms "incantation, divination, enchantment, charm, magic, or sorcery"'. It is a word that still bears some of the force of its etymological root, the verb *galan*, meaning "to sing" or "to enchant" or "to cry out aloud" (p. 27). See now also the DOE, s.v. *galdor*.

³³ Hugh Magennis, 'Ælfric and the Legend of the Seven Sleepers', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, 1996), pp. 317–31 (p. 317), briefly discusses how the Seven Sleepers are taken up in Anglo-Saxon texts. This legend appears three times in the prose corpus, twice in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, and once as the anonymous *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, preserved in the same manuscript as Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. Magennis has demonstrated that Gregory's text was known to Ælfric; he identifies three correspondences between Ælfric's *Sanctorum Septem Dormientum* and Gregory's *Passio Septem Dormientum apud Ephesum* (at p. 319).

of the long sleep its whole purpose and meaning'.³⁴ In fact, Gregory of Tours pays special attention to this feature by having both Malchus and Maximianus identify the divine purpose of the miracle in which they appear as the affirmation of the doctrine of bodily resurrection.³⁵ Ælfric, too, identifies the doctrine of resurrection as the key theological lesson to be learned from the legend.³⁶ *Charm 3* thus invokes the restorative power of the Seven Sleepers in order to effect a kind of resurrection, in this event not from death but from illness.³⁷

But perhaps the most intriguing feature of this legend for the purposes of *Charm 3* is a small detail that emphasizes the power of these brothers' names. Gregory writes, 'Quod dum ageretur, quidam Christianus in tabula plumbea nomina et martyrium eorum scribens, clam in aditu cavernae priusquam oppilaretur inclusit.'³⁸ Later, after the Sleepers awaken, the Bishop of Ephesus investigates the cave in order to determine whether their story is true: 'Cumque ingrederetur episcopus, invenit tabulam plumbeam, in qua omnia quae pertulerant habebantur scripta.'³⁹ After making this discovery and speaking with the brothers, the Sleepers are venerated even by the Emperor himself. This legend thus emphasizes the act of inscription whereby the Sleepers' names are written down. The tablet was instrumental, as Gregory makes clear, in proving the veracity of this miracle to the Bishop and Emperor. *Charm 3* instructs its practitioner to perform a similar action (writing the names of the Sleepers on wafers similar to those used in the sacrament) in order to effect positive change — in this case, the healing of the patient. This act of inscription is technically enacted on flesh, like the prose charms' instructions to write symbols on the patient's *earmas*, and like the movement of a scribe's pen

³⁴ Magennis, 'Ælfric and the Legend', p. 320.

³⁵ 'Propter te suscitavit nos Deus a terra ente diem magnum resurrectionis, ut credas sine dubitatione, quoniam est resurrection mortuorum' ('And now the Lord has raised me up with my brothers so that every age may understand that there will be a resurrection of the dead'). Trans. by Magennis, 'Ælfric and the Legend', p. 320.

³⁶ Magennis, 'Ælfric and the Legend', p. 322.

³⁷ The Seven Sleepers appear frequently in early medieval remedies. Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, pp. 276–78, cites four Anglo-Latin charms that invoke the Sleepers against fever.

³⁸ 'While this [the sealing up] was being done, a Christian wrote their names and their martyrdom on a lead tablet and secretly put it in the entrance to the cave before it was blocked off.' Quotations of Gregory of Tours are taken from PL 71. Translations are from Raymond Van Dam, *Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool, 1988), slightly modified.

³⁹ PL 71, col. 788. 'As the bishop entered, he found the lead tablet on which everything the men had endured was recorded in writing' (trans. by Van Dam, *Glory of the Martyrs*, p. 117).

across parchment. A communion wafer, transformed by the ritual of the Eucharist, is understood as Christ's body. To write the names of the Seven Sleepers on Christ's flesh is to doubly invoke the power of the resurrection in this charm's battle against *dweorh*. Thus, by appropriating the performance of writing as an act of power, *Charm 3* takes up a theme that appears both in the source material for the legend, and in the prose *dweorh* charms, a connection that is lost if one reads the metrical charm out of its manuscript context.

Charm 3's prose instructions continue by stating that the 'one' performing the *galdor* must sing it three times, once in the patient's left ear, once in the right ear, and once above his or her head.⁴⁰ It is worth dwelling briefly on this speech act, for it constitutes the kind of vocal event that Zumthor discusses at length in 'The Text and the Voice':

Uttering the spoken word thereby takes on within itself the value of a symbolic act: by reason of the voice, it is exhibition and a gift, aggression, conquest, and hope for victory over its adversary; manifest internalization overcome by the necessity to physically invade the object of its desire: the vocalized sound goes from the inside out and, without any other mediation, links together two lives.⁴¹

The 'two lives' linked together in this case are that of the (presumably healthy) practitioner and that of the sick patient. The mechanism of linking is the *galdor* itself, which proceeds from the mouth of the practitioner into the ears of the patient. After the *galdor* is sung, a virgin must hang the wafers, which have presumably been tied together in some way, around the patient's neck.⁴² This physical act also has a linking effect: the patient's life is connected, by means of the wafer necklace, to the lives of the Seven Sleepers. The prose section concludes with an admonition to repeat these actions for three days.

⁴⁰ Philip Shaw, in his recent essay 'Manuscript Texts of *Against a Dwarf*', in *Writing and Texts in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Alexander R. Rumble (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 96–113, concludes that this mention of the *galdor* is one piece of evidence indicating that the prose and metrical sections were, at some point in the past, different charms: 'It seems most likely that the prose and verse sections were two distinct remedies which, at some point in their transmission, were brought together by someone who saw them as relating to the same disease' (p. 107). Whether or not this point is accepted (see note 49 below), it has no direct bearing on my present argument, which focuses on *Charm 3* as it exists in MS Harley 585.

⁴¹ Zumthor, 'The Text and the Voice', p. 71.

⁴² Shaw, 'Manuscript Texts', p. 109, finds it surprising that the wafers are not eaten, as is common in other charms that mandate the inscription of the names of the Seven Sleepers onto communion wafers. He speculates that 'This may be another alteration to the prose charm in order to make it fit with the verse formula' (p. 109).

In sum, the prose portion of *Charm 3* mandates that seven sanctified pieces of unleavened bread (the wafers consecrated in the Mass as Christ's body) be inscribed with the names of seven legendary Christian figures who are famous for a type of resurrection — for waking out of a deep, prolonged sleep. A virgin (that is, a person of either sex who is pure in body) places the sacred object constituted by the seven inscribed wafers around the neck of the sick person, and the practitioner sings a *galdor* three times by the patient's head. This entire ritual is then repeated for each of three days ('do man swa þry dagas'). It is important to note that these instructions are a synthesis of vocal, textual, and ritual components; song, writing, and physical movements are all integral to the success of the remedy.

While the narrative part of the *galdor* is so oblique as to be extremely hard to interpret, it seems to invoke a prior moment in time when a 'spider creature'⁴³ intervened on the patient's behalf, with the end result that — in a process involving a pledged peace settlement involving the *dweores sweostar* or 'sister of the dwarf' — the patient was cured. First the 'spider creature' made its entrance, carrying a *hama*, or 'covering' of some kind.⁴⁴ The creature addressed *þu* — the patient — saying that she or he was his horse, then set his *teage* ('tie, band, string', or perhaps plural

⁴³ The manuscript reads *inspidenwiht*, with *n* altered from some other letter (Dobbie, *Minor Poems*, p. 121 n.). Cockayne was the first to emend the text to *in spider wiht*, and many later editors follow his example. David Gay, 'Anglo-Saxon Metrical Charm 3, Against a Dwarf: A Charm Against Witch-Riding?', *Folklore*, 99 (1988), 174–77, supports this emendation by noting that 'dwarves and spiders are often connected in folk tradition', for 'Swedish *dverg* can mean both dwarf and spider' while 'in Breton, Welsh, and Cornish the word *cor* can mean both dwarf and spider' (p. 175). J. H. G. Grattan and Charles Singer, *Anglo-Saxon Magic and Medicine* (London, 1952), p. 162, title the poem 'Lay of the Night Goblin' in their edition of the *Lacnunga* and wish to read the charm as against nightmare; they emend the text to *inwridenwiht* and interpret the creature, with much freedom, as a 'corpse swathed in grave clothes'. Pettit avoids the problem by leaving *inspidenwiht* intact in his edition. I follow the ASPR edition and read the crux as 'spider wiht'. However, this creature does not appear to be synonymous with the dwarf, as Gay assumes, but is better construed as the agent of healing, for it effects the cooling of the patient.

⁴⁴ B-T defines *hama* (s.v.) as 'a covering'. In his 1921 *Supplement to the Dictionary*, T. Northcote Toller expands that definition to encompass 'a natural covering, integument, membrane, skin', including the 'slough of a serpent'. The word *hama* is often compounded, as in *feðer-hama* 'plumage', *cild-hama* 'womb, uterus', and *flæsc-hama* 'covering of flesh', 'body' (seen as a kind of covering for the soul). What *hama* denotes in *Charm 3* is not at all clear, but the term would seem to refer to some part of the spider creature's natural body that could be carried in its hand. Could this be some kind of web?

‘strings’) on the patient’s neck.⁴⁵ They — presumably the spider creature and the patient — then began to travel, and as soon as they came away from the land (the land of fever and delirium?) their limbs began to cool. At this point, the *dweores sweostar* came on the scene.⁴⁶ The sister agreed to what sounds like a definitive settlement (*þa geendade heo*),⁴⁷ and she swore oaths that *þis* (a neuter pronoun referring most likely to the *galdor*, a neuter noun, but more generally perhaps to the whole medical intervention) would never injure the sick person, nor would it injure anyone else who is able to obtain or knows how to sing this spell.

The story that is recounted in the *galdor* may be utterly fantastic, but it mirrors the initial prose instructions in several important ways. The sister’s reference to the song of which she is a part both echoes and reinforces the instructions about the *galdor* contained in the prescription. Similarly, the spider creature’s action of placing his *teage* around the patient’s neck chimes with the instructions concerning the placement of the wafer necklace (note that the same noun, *sweora* ‘neck’, is used in both instances). By enacting several key parts of the cure, the *galdor* functions as a reminder of and prompt for the proper actions to take against an illness that is evidently caused by the same malignant dwarf — or else, one of the same *kind* of creature — that caused such trouble in the mythic past. The metrical portion of *Charm 3* thus serves as both a magical and mnemonic device that links together not only the practitioner and the patient, but also the modes of poetry and prose, the vocal and the written, and the mythological past and the present moment.

But these are not the only doublings that occur in *Charm 3*. The *galdor* contains two additional pairs of words or phrases. Its first half-line, ‘Her com in gangan’ (9), is mirrored in line 13: ‘þa com in gangan’. And the verb *ongunnnan* is used twice — once in line 11 and once in line 12 — referring both times to the spider creature’s ‘riding’ of the patient. These echoing moments recall the three

⁴⁵ See B-T, s.v. *teáh*, sense I, and cf. Old Icelandic *taug* ‘a rope, string’. The word is often used in the plural. While the form *teage* could represent accusative singular ‘band’ (as translated above), it could also be construed as accusative plural ‘ties, strings’, here conceived of as the bridle and reins of a ‘horse’ (the patient).

⁴⁶ The manuscript reads *deores sweostar* (sister of the creature). Dobbie emends to *dweores sweostar* (sister of the dwarf) — a satisfying change, as it links the *galdor* explicitly to a *dweorh* ‘dwarf’ who is evidently the source of the *dweorh* ‘fever’. I accept this emendation and read the end of the charm as telling how the sister of the malign *dweorh* swears agreement to a settlement that involves the *spider wiht*’s cure, thus making peace between the *dweorh* and the patient.

⁴⁷ See the DOE, s.v. *ge-endian*, sense 2 ‘to come to an end, stop, cease’, and cf. sense 1.d ‘to determine, settle’ and sense 1.c.i.b.i, which consists of the legal phrase *sprece geendian* ‘to settle a suit’.

pairs of charms that are written out a few folios earlier in MS Harley 585. This clustering strategy helps the reader (or listener) both to remember key phrases within the *galdor* and to reflect upon the broader manuscript context in which *Charm 3* appears.

Conclusion: The Old English Dweorh Charms as Acts of Cultural Synthesis

I have been treating the *galdor* that is preserved as part of *Charm 3* as a song or incantation preserved in textual form. This may seem to be a questionable practice, for as Zumthor reminds us, ‘in whatever state they have come down to us, these texts are texts; and nothing authorizes us to take them as simple recordings of spoken words — that is to say, to jump, by metaphor and as if it were of no great consequence, from the mode of our sensory perception of it to another mode’.⁴⁸ In the case of *Charm 3*, however, we are authorized at several different moments to understand the metrical portion as just such a recording. When referring to the *galdor*, the prose section uses verbs that exclusively connote vocality.⁴⁹ The manuscript reads *her æfter cwæð*, with no reference to writing, and the practitioner is explicitly ordered to sing it (*singan*). The *galdor* also refers to itself as something to be voiced aloud, as can be seen in the reference to those who either ‘obtain’ it or ‘know how to voice it aloud’ (cf. *ongalan cupe*, line 17). Here reference is perhaps made to both the patient and the practitioner, for the patient ‘obtains’ the *galdor* by hearing it — by having it sung into his ears and over his head — while the practitioner clearly knows how to sing it. In either case, the oral/aural power of the metrical portion is emphasized. *Charm 3*, then, preserves a written record of an oral text — perhaps the most unambiguous such record in the Anglo-Saxon corpus. It is proof that, as Niles puts it, ‘healers were singers’ and that ‘even though healing practices can be known only through mute texts, we should not forget that a *gealdor* [or *galdor*] was a sequence of words to be sung out in a situation of severe need’.⁵⁰

However, *Charm 3* also complicates Niles’s assertion by demonstrating that both oral *and* written modes are essential to its success. The healer performing this

⁴⁸ Zumthor, ‘The Text and the Voice’, p. 70.

⁴⁹ It is on these grounds, in part, that objections can be raised to Shaw’s description of his hypothetical redactor’s activities: ‘the redactor has clumsily integrated the two texts by adding and deleting instructions in the prose charm’ (‘Manuscript Texts’, p. 109). If indeed *Charm 3* represents a combination of two remedies, the synthesis is subtle and effective.

⁵⁰ Niles, *Homo Narrans*, p. 27.

charm must be a reader and writer as well as a singer. In fact, the very first instruction in *Charm 3* is to write the names of the Seven Sleepers onto wafers — an act that echoes the power of writing in the legend of the Seven Sleepers itself.⁵¹ The wafers then go on to play an instrumental role both in the remainder of the prescription and in the *galdor*. At every turn, the *galdor* serves as a reminder to the practitioner of the series of events — detailed in the prose instructions — that must be undertaken to combat a severe illness that is evidently caused by the malice of a supernatural power. In this way, *Charm 3* is exemplary of what Mark Amodio calls the ‘medieval English oral-literate nexus’:

The oral and the literate do not occupy discrete and conflicting cognitive spheres. Orality and literacy are parts of a subtle, complex, lengthy process of cultural change rather than sudden and (largely) unrelated moments of cultural evolution. [...] What emerge from the vernacular manuscript culture of the English Middle Ages are, to paraphrase a title of Foley’s, texts that speak to readers and listeners who hear.⁵²

Shaw concludes his analysis of *Charm 3* by suggesting that ‘it is tempting to view *Against a Dwarf* as a synthesis of written and oral charm practices’.⁵³ It is not merely *tempting* to do so — it is necessary. *Charm 3* speaks to its readers via the *galdor* that ‘her æfter cweð’, and it relies in part on the act of hearing (through the patient’s ears, quite specifically, as well as by other persons) to effect a cure. But song alone is not, in this case, enough to restore a patient’s good health; it must supplement, and in turn be supplemented by, the power of literacy and inscription, if it is to have continuing existence in space and time beyond the frontiers of a given community.

When we read the three *dweorh* charms of MS Harley 585 together as performances in their manuscript context, they provide us with a snapshot not only of the moment in which these texts were written down, but also of the state of Anglo-Saxon medical practice in the early eleventh century. They show us a system that relies on singing and speaking to effect positive change, even as it privileges the magical power of writing. It is noteworthy that the *galdor* in *Charm 3* contains no references to Christianity, which first institutionalized the practice of writing in

⁵¹ Similarly, both of the two prose *dweorh* charms begin with the singular imperative form of *writan*: ‘Writ þis ...’.

⁵² Mark Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition* (Notre Dame, 2004), p. 22, with reference to John Miles Foley, ‘Texts that Speak to Readers Who Hear: Old English Poetry and the Languages of Oral Tradition’, in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. by Allen J. Frantzen (Albany, 1991), pp. 141–56.

⁵³ Shaw, ‘Manuscript Texts’, p. 113.

Anglo-Saxon England, while the prose instructions of *Charm 3* and the two prose charms that precede it in the manuscript associate the power of the written word with Christian names and symbols. However, the *dweorh* charms in MS Harley 585 do not expose an underlying tension between the Christian/literate nexus and pagan/oral nexus — rather, they demonstrate how these modes converge in what is arguably the most *practically* important genre in the Anglo-Saxon corpus. Roy Liuzza has observed a similar dynamic in Anglo-Saxon prognostic texts, which combine ‘folk’ wisdom and devotional material.⁵⁴ This juxtaposition has led him to the conclusion that ‘the later Anglo-Saxon conception of the orthodox spiritual life was more capacious than many modern scholars have imagined. If we are to understand these texts properly, we may need to unlearn some of our modern distinctions’.⁵⁵

Liuzza’s advice about the limitations of modern binary distinctions applies equally well to the *Lacnunga* charms, which unapologetically synthesize both poetry and prose, both Latin and the vernacular, both Christian and pagan lore, and both vocal and written modes of performance. In this respect, the Old English charms ‘wiþ dweorh’ serve as a provocative point of access to the understanding of Old English culture more generally.

⁵⁴ Roy M. Liuzza, ‘Anglo-Saxon Prognostics in Context: A Survey and Handlist of Manuscripts’, *ASE*, 30 (2001), 181–230 (p. 183).

⁵⁵ Liuzza, ‘Anglo-Saxon Prognostics in Context’, p. 211.

THE FONTHILL GHOST WORD, THE FONTHILL THIEF, AND EARLY WEST SAXON SCRIBAL CULTURE

John D. Niles

The Fonthill Letter, a long personal letter dating from the reign of King Edward the Elder (r. 899–924), is widely recognized as one of the most fascinating and important records to have come down to us from the Anglo-Saxon period.¹ Composed in the voice of a man of wealth and rank, most likely as a result of an act of oral dictation on his part,² it is a text as remarkable for its

¹ P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968), no. 1445. See particularly Simon Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 53–97. This article presents a superb commentary on nearly all aspects of the letter, and I shall rely upon it at many points. Full of discriminating historical and legal insight, as well, particularly as regards the delicate situation of the author of the letter, is Nicholas P. Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaaf and Anglo-Saxon Law in Practice', in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. by Stephen Baxter and others (Farnham, 2009), pp. 301–17. Keynes characterizes the letter as 'one of the most interesting of the corpus of documents which illustrate the working of Anglo-Saxon law' (p. 53), 'of quite exceptional importance as a legal record' (p. 54), and 'one of the most remarkable documents to survive from the Anglo-Saxon period' (p. 95). No more need be said on the subject of its significance.

² An ealdorman named Ordlaaf is surely the author of the letter, despite doubts that have been voiced by Mark Boynton and Susan Reynolds, 'The Author of the Fonthill Letter', *ASE*, 25 (1996), 91–95. Keynes sees Ordlaaf's authorship as 'guaranteed' by the language of the letter itself ('The Fonthill Letter', p. 55 n. 16), while more recently Mechthild Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter: Language, Law and the Discourse of Disciplines', *Anglia*, 123 (2005), 667–86, reviews the matter and finds 'no linguistic and stylistic evidence for "Ordlaaf" and the author being two different persons' (p. 669). Whether Ordlaaf penned the letter himself rather than dictating it to a scribe is another matter. Here I depart from Gretsch's opinion, for the evidence seems to me to favour dictation (see the discussion below).

personal style and rhetoric, and for its evidentiary status as an ‘original’ legal document,³ as it is for its bearing on the events of social history, with its stage-by-stage account of a Wiltshire dispute that flared up with some persistence over a period of about twenty years. In the course of his review of these events, the author tells of an incident upon which much turned, namely, an act of cattle theft that led to the arrest of the person found guilty of the crime — the author’s godson, a thegn named Helmstan — and the subsequent confiscation of Helmstan’s lands and goods.⁴

The early West Saxon language in which the Fonthill Letter is composed is not always transparent, however, so that some aspects of this dispute (OE *geflit*)⁵ are clothed in a certain amount of obscurity. Paragraph 10 of the letter in particular⁶ — the one that tells of the cattle theft — bristles with linguistic difficulties because of its number of rare or unique words. Partly for that reason, the passage has been viewed with circumspection ever since the time of its first modern editors, John Mitchell Kemble and Benjamin Thorpe.⁷ Substantial and learned contributions

³ Keynes finds ‘good reason to believe that the single sheet has the status of an original’ (p. 55), pointing out that the document appears to be an actual one used in this legal dispute. Patrick Wormald, in *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol. I: *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), refers to the document as surviving ‘in “original” form’ (p. 145). The inverted quote marks used by Wormald amount to a concession that an ‘original’ document, in a legal context, could yet be produced by a scribe’s copying efforts.

⁴ The question of whether the wealth of which Helmstan was deprived consisted of all his lands and property, or only his moveable goods, is discussed by Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, pp. 81–85. Keynes adduces sound reasons to conclude (a) that Helmstan owned a large estate at Tisbury, next door to Fonthill, and hence was a thegn rather than a common thief, and (b) that he was ruined by being stripped of his whole estate, having been found guilty not just of theft but of breach of faith with the King, so that ‘forfeiture of his land would have been the inevitable consequence’ (p. 84). The King subsequently was persuaded to grant Helmstan an estate on which to live thereafter.

⁵ The term *geflit* ‘strife, dispute, struggle, lawsuit’ is used in the document’s endorsement to refer to the lawsuit that the letter was designed to kill. By extension, that term can be used for the strife whereby the author of the letter and his dependents were engaged in a long-term struggle with the family of a man named Æthelhelm Higa, who brought the Fonthill suit forward and who had earlier pursued a similar case.

⁶ Reference is to Keynes’s paragraphing; the OE text has no internal divisions.

⁷ In a letter of 16 September 1842, Kemble wrote to his friend Jakob Grimm, ‘Will you look at Vol. II p. 134, of the *Codex Diplomaticus*’ — that is, vol. II of Kemble’s six-volume edition of the charters — ‘and see what you can make of “âhrêdde ða spor wreclas”’: *John Mitchell Kemble and Jakob Grimm: A Correspondence 1832–1852*, ed. by Raymond A. Wiley (Leiden, 1971), p. 246. Kemble’s *Codex Diplomaticus* includes no translations. Benjamin Thorpe, *Diplomatarium Anglicum Ævi Saxonici* (London, 1865), pp. 169–74, includes a translation of the Fonthill Letter but

towards the understanding of the language of the letter have been offered recently by Mechthild Gretsch and Carole Hough,⁸ but those two scholars are at odds with one another about the understanding of several key terms. Moreover, in the midst of these controversies, certain other matters of interest have remained undiscussed.

Although a reading of paragraph 10 of the letter can scarcely be offered in which one feels full confidence, an additional step in that direction can be taken, I shall argue, if one key word in the text as it has come down to us, MS *spor wreclas*, is understood to be the result of a garbling of this passage in the course of its written transmission rather than being, as is generally assumed, the plural form of an Old English compound noun '*spor-wrecl* (?)' that is otherwise unattested.⁹ Once this ghost word is banished from the lexicon and a more plausible reading restored, even if this reading too must remain a tentative one, then the way is cleared for a sound understanding not just of this lexical item, but also of the passage in which it is embedded. In addition, with careful attention to the meaning, in context, of the other difficult Old English words that figure in this same sentence, it is possible to make reasonably good sense of the story of Helmstan's arrest.

As one outcome of this investigation, it will be possible to see the central figure in this drama, Helmstan, in a somewhat different light than that in which he is usually viewed. Rather than being a reckless and unscrupulous man with no sense of consequences, or a thegn suffering from kleptomania (since it was the theft of a belt that got him into trouble in the first place, well before the cattle appeared on the scene),¹⁰ it might be possible to see him as the chief loser in a vicious dispute

not of the troublesome phrase just quoted, for as Thorpe explains in a footnote, 'This I do not understand' (p. 172 n. 1). In fact, Thorpe introduces the Fonthill Letter as a whole with the honest comment, 'There is much in this document that I do not pretend to understand' (p. 169 n. 1).

⁸ Mechthild Gretsch, 'The Language of the Fonthill Letter', *ASE*, 23 (1994), 57–102; Carole Hough, 'Cattle-Tracking in the Fonthill Letter', *English Historical Review*, 115 (2000), 864–92; and Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter'.

⁹ See B-T, s.v. '*spor-wrecl* (?)', glossed tentatively as 'What is tracked after being driven off (?)'. Through the use of question marks, Toller marks both the word and its gloss as no more than guesses. While a space separates the two elements *spor* and *wreclas* as written in the manuscript, that fact tells us nothing about whether the scribe thought of these as two separate words rather than a single compound, for compounds are often written in this manner.

¹⁰ See Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaaf and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 311, who uses the term in a light-hearted manner. The suggestion has been made that, in addition to the crimes of which we know, Helmstan may actually have stolen the deeds pertaining to the Fonthill estate (Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 71 and n. 80), or that 'some sharp practice' may have been involved in their acquisition (Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', p. 91). This speculation,

whose *modus operandi* was to portray one's enemies in the worst possible light, taking advantage of every tooth and nail of the law so as to humble them and leave them destitute or worse. Whether he was really a thief, or was a worse man than his neighbours, is difficult to say, seeing that we have no access today to disinterested information as to the facts of this history and the motives of the persons involved. All that we can be sure of is that, not just once but twice, Helmstan was found guilty of crimes that led to his ruin, and that he escaped with his life chiefly thanks to his godfather's interventions.

The Fonthill Letter should be introduced here more fully, however, as a prelude to discussion of the passage on which I will focus attention, for any assessment of the reliability of that text must take into account its unique character.

The Fonthill Letter and Early West Saxon Vernacular Textuality

The Fonthill Letter was composed in direct, non-ostentatious English by a man named Ordlaſ, who held the office of ealdorman during the closing years of the reign of King Alfred (d. 899) and the first decade of the tenth century.¹¹ It is a cagey letter, as such documents tend to be, in that it is obviously written to protect the interests of the writer. Ealdorman Ordlaſ makes reference to Helmstan's crimes in a matter-of-fact way that leaves no doubt that, despite his having sponsored Helmstan at baptism and having defended him on multiple previous occasions, he now has no intention of taking the side of a proven thief and, moreover, someone who had violated the King's trust.¹² The man Helmstan is not Ealdorman Ordlaſ's concern in this letter; the legal title to Fonthill is.

The text is written in early square minuscule script on one side of a single sheet of parchment, measuring *c.* 175 x 380 mm, preserved in the archives of the

however, may be a gratuitous way of adding to the list of Helmstan's crimes, seeing that what it is chiefly based upon is the absence of a statement, on the part of the letter's author, as to how Helmstan came to possess the deeds. An alternative way of accounting for the fact that no such statement is made is that Helmstan had clear title, so that nothing more needed to be said.

¹¹ For what is known about Ordlaſ, see Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 55–58. On the language and style of the letter, and in particular on the scribe's sustained effort to represent the sounds of contemporary speech in his spelling, see Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter'.

¹² The dangers involved in Ordlaſ's intervening on Helmstan's behalf once Helmstan had been found guilty of one or more serious crimes can scarcely be overestimated: see Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaſ and Anglo-Saxon Law', pp. 316–17. Ordlaſ takes care not to contradict the findings of Helmstan's guilt.

Cathedral Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury.¹³ The question of how the letter came to be preserved there cannot well be answered, but perhaps the matter is not impenetrable. If the letter was sent to King Edward during the period 910–20, as seems likely,¹⁴ then after it had served its purpose it may have been stored at Winchester among other legal papers. In the course of time it might naturally have been transferred to Canterbury Cathedral along with other documents pertaining to the landholdings of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy or to noteworthy events of the pre-Conquest period.¹⁵ While the archives of the West Saxon monarchy have not survived, this sheet might have been preserved for its bearing on the legal title to two Wiltshire estates, Fonthill and Lydiard, the former of which, through an exchange of lands, had come into the hands of the Bishop of Winchester.¹⁶ Since this subject is a speculative one, however, it may be left aside.

The letter has the look of a scribal copy, for it contains obvious scribal errors, most of which are corrected through either erasures or interlinear insertions.¹⁷ The text was written out in a manner so as to fit the whole of it onto this sheet. Whoever

¹³ Dean and Chapter Library, Chart. Ant. C. 1282 (Red Book, no. 12). Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 59–60, prints reduced facsimiles of both the recto of this sheet, which contains the whole text of the letter, and the verso, which contains an endorsement written subsequently in a different hand.

¹⁴ Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', shows reason to conclude that the letter was written 'nearer c. 920 than c. 900' (p. 95) regardless of the fact that Helmstan's theft of the cattle must have taken place in the year 900 or 901. A number of years seem to have intervened between that incident and the time when Ordlaaf was sued for the land at Fonthill.

¹⁵ One may compare the life history of the Parker Chronicle and Laws (CCCC, MS 173), written at Winchester and then shifted to Christ Church, Canterbury during the early eleventh century or somewhat later.

¹⁶ See Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 89–91.

¹⁷ Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', and Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaaf and Anglo-Saxon Law', pp. 303–06, call attention to these errors and corrections through their respective sigla. There are six instances of interlinear insertions ranging from a single letter to a whole word; these are *for* 'stael' in paragraph 2, *ða undæde* 'gedyde' in paragraph 3, 'his' 'bonda' in paragraph 6, 'ða' 'ascade ic' in paragraph 11, *ða gesahte* 'he' in paragraph 13, and *ði n'ra weotena* in paragraph 14. There are two instances of erasure of a word so as to substitute something different; these are <Elfric> in paragraph 4 and <Helmstan> in paragraph 5. And there are at least three instances of apparent miswriting, namely *æst* for *ærest* in paragraph 5, *breber* for *brember* in paragraph 10, and *gesahte* for *gesohte* in paragraph 13. These features of the letter are all visible in the reduced facsimile printed by Keynes. Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', suggests that *breber* is not a miswriting, as others have thought, but rather is 'a syncopated colloquial form of *brēm(b)elbrær*' (p. 82). If a shortened form of that word were used, however, one would expect to find the spelling *bremel* rather than *breber*. DOE, s.v. *brēmēl*, *brebel*, *brember*; also *brēmēl-brēr*.

created the document must then have been able to visualize it as a whole item before writing out the text. In other words, either a full set of notes, or a rough draft, or an exemplar for the extant document must have been at hand.¹⁸ Certain mistakes, such as the replication 'he he' at one point (with the second instance of the pronoun erased),¹⁹ are best explained as sight errors made by a person copying from a written source. At the same time, when we take into account the substance of the letter, with its unadorned English, its wealth of circumstantial detail, and, at one point, its almost audible tone of exasperation as regards the person who has raised this suit — 'And, Sir, when will any suit be closed if one can end it neither with money nor with an oath? And if one wishes to change every judgement which King Alfred gave, when shall we have finished disputing?'²⁰ — we seem to be hearing the voice of Ealdorman Ordlafr himself, speaking as a man who was on personal terms

¹⁸ For reasons that are impossible to determine, the parchment seems to have been cut in advance to a size thought to be sufficient for a text of this exact length. The text was then written out in a manner that, towards the bottom, is adapted to the space made available by this cut. Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 61, calls attention to the forced spacing of the last two lines, which are respectively only about 62 per cent and about 13 per cent the length of the other lines, though they are complete as regards syntax and sense. While Keynes entertains the possibility that Ordlafr's account was tailored to suit the size of the sheet, the more natural inference, seeing that the letter reads like a complete and judiciously considered statement as it stands, is that someone prepared the sheet for just this amount of text.

¹⁹ This error occurs in the eighteenth line of text down from the top, in Keynes's paragraph 9 (see Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 77 and his reduced facsimile).

²⁰ 'ȝ loef, hwonne bið engu spæc geendedu gif mon ne mæg nowðer ne mid feo ne mid aða geendigan? Oððe gif mon ælcne dom wile onwenden ðe Ælfræd cing gesette, hwonne habbe we ðonne gemotad?' Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 76. This version of the OE text represents a reprint, with slight changes of a typographical nature, of the text as edited by F. E. Harmer in *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914), pp. 60–63. As for Keynes's translation, it represents a very lightly edited version of Dorothy Whitelock's translation in *English Historical Documents*, vol. 1: c. 500–1042, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd edn (London, 1979), pp. 544–46. A more recent edition of the text is offered by Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlafr and Anglo-Saxon Law', pp. 302–06, as a prelude to his and S. E. Kelly's forthcoming edition *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury* for the British Academy series 'Anglo-Saxon Charters'. One should note, however, that the text as printed by Brooks includes two misprints plus a potentially misleading punctuation mark; these are *aegðer* for *ægðer* (p. 303, line 1) and *hy* for *hwy* (p. 305, line 2), plus a misleading mark of punctuation, namely the *punctus versus* (;) instead of the *punctus elevatus* (·) at the end of the note on the verso. Since my purposes are best served by the Harmer/Keynes system of orthography, capitalization, and punctuation (and since I favour certain aspects of the Whitelock/Keynes translation, as well; see the discussion of specific points below), I use Keynes's article as my source for both text and translation.

with the King and would have been one of his senior advisors. These are not the tones of a scribe or of some other bureaucrat writing on Ordlaſ's behalf.

There is thus reason to infer that the text is the product of an act of oral dictation, a 'fetch me a scribe' moment, so to speak. The words that would have first been inscribed on such an occasion (on wax tablets, initially, with some words or expressions abbreviated?) would subsequently have been copied out in a continuous text on vellum such as we now have. While Gretsch imagines a scenario whereby Ealdorman Ordlaſ penned the letter himself, and while she explores the implications of such an autograph document for our understanding of the progress of lay literacy during the post-Alfredian period,²¹ the simpler and more obvious inference, in the absence of evidence concerning Ordlaſ's schooling,²² is that he dictated the letter to a scribe. That was the normal practice for people of his rank during this period, and there is no need to postulate an exception here.

As for the character of the writing, it strikes one as efficient rather than elegant. Referring to it as 'of uneven aspect' and 'unpractised' when compared with examples of some other hands from this same period, Keynes infers that 'the scribe was not a professional or experienced practitioner of writing'.²³ Brooks too finds the script 'both awkward and unpracticed'.²⁴ With due respect to these formidable scholars, such assessments, while understandable, strike me as running ahead of the evidence, since penmanship that looks awkward to the observer may still not have been awkward for the writer to produce. It is hard to judge how many hours of practice a given scribe may have had, particularly seeing that the aims of different kinds of writing (e.g. Scripture, a healing charm, a letter to one's king) can be quite various. The paucity of extant documents composed in early West Saxon, moreover, inhibits conclusions as to what standards of professionalism might have been

²¹ Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', p. 77 and pp. 95–98. Similarly, Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaſ and Anglo-Saxon Law', remarks that the letter 'clearly tells us something about literacy in a nobleman's household at the start of the tenth century' (p. 315). Personally I doubt that the letter tells us anything significant about lay literacy, for the scribe would not have been a layman but rather one of the secular clergy, while Ordlaſ might perfectly well have been illiterate. Ordlaſ was keenly aware of the uses of textuality in the king's court at this time, and he could call parchment and a scribe to hand when he wished. That is perhaps the important point.

²² While Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', hypothesizes a scenario wherein Ordlaſ attended a school founded by King Alfred, where he would have been 'one of the brighter students' (p. 98), this train of thought is speculative, seeing that we know next to nothing about the school that, according to Asser, King Alfred founded, and nothing at all about Ordlaſ's education.

²³ Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 58 and 61.

²⁴ Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaſ and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 307.

the norm among non-monastic writers of that tongue. Though clumsy-looking compared with examples of insular minuscule that were produced some decades later (e.g. the Exeter Book or the earliest copies of the homilies of Ælfric), the script is legible enough to serve its purpose. It can fairly, I think, be called at least a semi-professional production, to judge from Gretsch's analysis of its remarkably consistent spellings,²⁵ as long as one keeps in mind that it is a workaday document rather than one that strives for elegance. It lacks any heading, signature, capitalization, punctuation, or other noteworthy visible features other than a square cross to mark its beginning, with another cross at the head of the dorse. In evaluating the script, one should keep in mind that this was a document meant for a particular occasion, not for ongoing use.

Very likely, since the Fonthill Letter was meant to have evidentiary status, two identical versions of it would have been written out, one to be sent to the King and the other to be retained. The copy that has survived, since it has survived, is likely to be the one sent to the King. The presence, near the top of the verso, of an endorsement summarizing the outcome of the case (a happy one, from the Ealdorman's point of view) suggests that we are dealing with a document that was used as evidence in a legal case, then later filed away bearing this annotation. As for the question of where the letter was written, it was probably produced at one of Ealdorman Ordlafr's estates. The alternative possibility, that it was produced in an ecclesiastical setting such as Winchester's Old Minster (where a related charter was written),²⁶ has rightly seemed less plausible, for the Fonthill Letter is free from rhetorical elegance and, more significantly, makes no reference to the interests of anyone other than the author.²⁷

If one accepts the likelihood that the text was written by a scribe, very likely a priest, employed in Ealdorman Ordlafr's household, then certain features of its language, style, and physical appearance that might merit the term 'non-normative' become more easily understood. Besides its uneven dimensions and lineation, these

²⁵ It must be said that Gretsch herself, 'The Language of the Fonthill Letter', pp. 76–77, regards the scribe's attempt to achieve consistency in spelling as evidence of a *lack* of professionalism on his part. Her suggestion that Ordlafr himself is the scribe is based upon this argument. Could it be, however, that an initial hypothesis that Ordlafr is the scribe has led her to construe the evidence in a counterintuitive fashion?

²⁶ On this Winchester charter (Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 1284), which helps to confirm Ordlafr's identity, see Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 89–90, and Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlafr and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 314.

²⁷ Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 91–92 and n. 173, finds it unlikely that the letter was a Winchester production. Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', p. 95, agrees.

include syntax that is often forthright but sometimes simply abrupt;²⁸ the spelling of proper names in a manner that reflects their ordinary pronunciation;²⁹ an avoidance of consonant clusters involving *r*;³⁰ an indifference to certain aspects of the ‘standard’ inflectional system, particularly as regards nasal consonants;³¹ the irregular spelling of certain words;³² and the use of at least one non–West Saxon spelling.³³ The letter’s philological interest, in fact, could be said to increase to the extent that it departs from the Winchester standard.³⁴

The reason why Ealdorman Ordlaƿ wrote to King Edward should be taken into account, as well, or else the whole production makes little sense. This was to show that an estate formerly in Ordlaƿ’s possession — one located at Fonthill, Wiltshire — had indeed rightfully been his when he signed it over to the New Minster, Winchester, in exchange for an equivalent parcel of land located elsewhere in Wiltshire. Ordlaƿ’s title to the Fonthill estate had been challenged by a man named Æthelhelm Higa — ‘Higa’ being a by-name evidently denoting a person who had a significant place in the family even if not by virtue of descent or marriage.³⁵ Nothing is known about Æthelhelm Higa except that he had failed in an earlier attempt to win Fonthill as part of an action against Helmstan. The Fonthill estate

²⁸ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, speaks of the syntax as ‘wobbly’ (p. 147). While Gretsċh, ‘Language of the Fonthill Letter’, p. 90, speaks of it in more positive terms, there are definitely some bumpy spots. An example is the following sentence from paragraph 11: ‘Đa swaf Eanulf Penearding on — was gerefa — ða genom eal ðæt yrfe him on ðæt he ahte to Tyssebyrig’ (Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, p. 80). With the syntax smoothed out, what this means is ‘Then Eanwulf Penearding, who was the reeve, intervened, and took from him all the property that he owned at Tisbury’ (ibid.). The absence of punctuation in the OE text could have made this passage a stumbling block for its readers, though the main point is clear.

²⁹ For instance, *Æðelm*, *Æðered*, and *Osulf* for *Æðelhelm*, *Æðelred*, and *Oswulf*, respectively. Such contractions are unremarkable in Anglo-Saxon legal documents.

³⁰ Hence such forms as *mire* (for *minre*) and *specan* (for *sprecan*).

³¹ Note for example, in paragraph 5, *mid ðon bocon* for *mid ðem bocum* and *þa ðuhte us eallan* for *þa ðuhte us eallum*, and, in paragraph 14, *to minan londe* for *to minum londe* and *sealde hit ðon biscope* for *sealde hit ðem biscope*. Such forms as these, again, are found in many documents.

³² The apparent misspellings *æst* for *ærest*, *breber* for *brember*, and *gesahte* for *gesohte* have been noted above.

³³ The spelling *speremon* is Kentish; cf. West Saxon *spyremon*.

³⁴ Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, comments in similar terms on the interest of this document for historians: ‘The story [...] is all the more interesting for being so parochial’ (p. 53).

³⁵ See B-T, s.v. *hiwan*, with the variant spelling *higan*, a plural noun glossed as ‘members of a household’.

was not an especially big one — it came to only five hides — but both men cared about it in the tenacious manner that is typical of this era, Æthelhelm Higa on account of what might have been a disputed inheritance and Ordlaſ because he had no intention of forfeiting the land that he had since obtained through a swap with the New Minster.³⁶ But let us trace the story to its origins, as Ordlaſ tells it.

During the latter part of the reign of King Alfred the Great (d. 899), the estate at Fonhill was owned by Helmstan. At the start of our story, however, Helmstan was in desperate straits, being threatened with legal outlawry after having been found guilty of stealing a belt belonging to a man named Æthelred. With Ealdorman Ordlaſ's help at the oath, Helmstan was able to mitigate his punishment and hold onto his lands — most of them, that is. For prior to the solemn procedure of the oath, as an act of prudence on his part (shading into a bribe),³⁷ Helmstan had signed over to Ordlaſ the title deed to Fonhill, which was *bōc-lond* 'land owned by legal charter' and hence alienable in this way. After this arrangement was made, Ordlaſ allowed Helmstan to have the estate on loan for life, so that Helmstan could have remained in place there just as before, though without title to the land.

Since belts are not usually thought of as precious objects, while 'theft' is an ugly word whose pejorative force can evaporate if the accused person can show legitimate title to the object in question, it is worth directing attention briefly to the nature of Helmstan's crime. Was the belt a sword-belt? If so, it could have been a costly item. In addition, as is pointed out by Brooks, a sword-belt 'was understood as a symbol of noble status',³⁸ and status was something over which people fought and died. Did Helmstan steal the belt himself? If so, then why would a thegn have jeopardized his good standing in this way? Or was Helmstan guilty in the sense of being in possession of property that, legally, was not his, despite his opinion to the

³⁶ Keynes, 'The Fonhill Letter', pp. 71–72, raises the question as to whether the strife went back to a disputed inheritance, as did so many law cases of this era. It may be significant that the estate at Fonhill had formerly belonged to a man named Æthelwulf, who had given it to his wife Æthelthryth. The name 'Helmstan' does not chime with these names in alliterative fashion, although 'Æthelhelm Higa' does. Was Æthelhelm Higa then trying to regain an estate that had passed out of the hands of his immediate family?

³⁷ Keynes, 'The Fonhill Letter', notes that 'it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that he [Ordlaſ] was basically accepting a bribe from Helmstan in return for his support' (p. 75). On the other hand, in the language of this period Helmstan and Ordlaſ were *frēondas* 'friends, relatives, supporters', hence men whose interests were closely aligned and who, in principle, could be counted on for help and favours. Friends naturally exchange gifts, thereby cementing their solidarity. This was the thinking of the time, and the social order rested on it.

³⁸ Brooks, 'The Fonhill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaſ and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 315.

contrary? Had he perhaps confiscated an item claimed by someone else — claimed legitimately, in the eyes of the law? Anyway, who was this man Æthelred who is said to have been the owner of the belt — was he another relation of the Æthelhelm Higa who twice brought suit for Fonthill, as the similarity in their names suggests? The materials of a good historical novel lurk below the surface here, though they are too speculative to pursue. What is clear is that ‘the law’ during this period was not just a set of statutes; it was also the set of persons able to regulate society. In short, Helmstan was found guilty of theft, so he was a thief.

Once Helmstan’s punishment was settled upon — this would usually have consisted of the payment of restitution plus a fine — the matter could have been at an end. He was in a precarious situation, however, for even though he had kept Fonthill from falling into his enemies’ hands, and even though he still owned a larger and more valuable adjoining estate at Tisbury, he was no longer oath-worthy (OE *ād-wyrðe*) because of the failure of his defence when he was charged with the theft of the belt.³⁹ Before another two years had elapsed, Helmstan was found guilty of a second crime, this time that of lifting some cattle at Fonthill and transporting them to an adjoining estate at Chicklade.⁴⁰

Are we justified in suspecting that his enemies, aware of his vulnerability, took advantage of it at the first good opportunity, turning an innocent cattle roundup (perhaps one little different from dozens of others) into an act of cattle theft? Perhaps; but then again, perhaps Helmstan was an arrant thief. In any event, he was found guilty of stealing cattle at Fonthill and thereby was undone, now, apparently, being stripped of his lands and goods at Tisbury. His life was now in danger, as well, since King Edward had declared him an outlaw (a *flyma* ‘fugitive from justice’).⁴¹ What clinched the case against him was an odd bit of incriminating

³⁹ If he had admitted the theft, he would not have been guilty of *āþ-bryce* ‘perjury’, but he evidently had chosen to fight the accusation and had lost. See Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, p. 65, on this important matter, for which Helmstan had already suffered grief in the form of Æthelhelm’s attempt to gain the estate at Fonthill, an unusual development in a matter involving theft.

⁴⁰ Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, p. 79, includes a map illustrating these topographical relationships. Chicklade lies directly north-west of the village now called Fonthill Bishop, on the west border of Wiltshire (where it adjoins Somerset). Tisbury lies directly to the south. It seems likely that the estate at Tisbury included the land at Chicklade. If so, then Helmstan was moving cattle from one part of his lands to another, rather than rustling them off someone else’s estate (Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, p. 83).

⁴¹ See Keynes, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, p. 85 (paragraph 12 of the letter), as well as the discussion at p. 84. Once again, Helmstan was not just declared a thief; he was also a perjurer, in the eyes of the law, because he had falsely maintained his innocence. Moreover, he was subject to the charge

evidence: his face had been cut by a bramble, and he was said to have sustained this injury when trying to escape arrest. In addition to this (as we shall see), the cattle were tracked in a manner that was incriminating.

The rest of Helmstan's story can be passed over quickly, despite its interest in its own right. The most fascinating detail is that Helmstan, having been declared an outlaw, went to the grave of King Alfred in Winchester, obtaining there a seal (*insigle*) that, when Ealdorman Ordlaƿ presented it to King Edward, persuaded the King to withdraw Helmstan's sentence of outlawry and give him an estate on which to live thereafter. The visit to King Alfred's grave is an unparalleled incident, so that one can scarcely construe it with confidence. Perhaps this episode indicates not just a mood of desperation on the part of Helmstan, who was in the utmost danger at this point, but also his passionate commitment to his innocence, to the point of his calling upon King Edward's dead father, in effect, to support his oath. In any event, the combination of the visit to the grave, the presentation of the *insigle* to King Edward, and Ordlaƿ's influence at court led once again to the mitigation of Helmstan's punishment.

The last thing we know about this struggle is that some years after these events had come to pass, Æthelhelm Higa challenged the legality of Ordlaƿ's trade of the Fonthill lands to the Bishop of Winchester. This suit must have been based on the claim that all Helmstan's *yrfe* 'inherited wealth' had been declared forfeit, thus rendering invalid his prior gift of Fonthill to Ordlaƿ. To persons of the present day, this may seem like an unscrupulous attempt to exploit the law retroactively for one party's benefit. This is apparently what Ordlaƿ thought, too, hence the indignant tone of his letter as first quoted above. His rhetorically modulated expression of anger can be read as a sign that he and the Bishop of Winchester expected to get things their way this time, as indeed they did.⁴²

The Trouble with the Cattle

In paragraph 10 of the Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaƿ summarizes as follows the pivotal elements in Helmstan's ruin: his act of lifting the cattle and his subsequent arrest and flight, together with his unsuccessful attempt to deny the charge

of treason because he was a 'king's man' who had violated his oath to his lord. His property was therefore seized (by the king's reeve, as I construe this part of the document).

⁴² On the general application of this point, see the essays included in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, 1998).

brought against him. The author tells the story with rather cryptic brevity, as is understandable since he had no intention of reopening the case, having earlier won a compromise settlement at considerable risk to himself. The parts set out here in italics are the ones I mean to discuss.

Ða onufan ðæt ymban oðer healf gear nat ic hweðer ðe ymb tua, ða forstæl he ða *unledan oxan* æt Funtial, ðe he mid ealle fore forwearð, 7 draf to Cytlid; 7 *hine mon ðæret aparade. 7 his speremon ahredde ða sporwreclas*. Ða he fleah, ða torypte hine an breber ofer ðæt nebb; ða he ætsacan wolde, ða sæde him mon ðæt to tacne.⁴³

Dorothy Whitelock translates this passage as follows, including a question mark to indicate her crisis of confidence at a key point.

Then on top of that — I do not know whether it was a year and a half or two years later — he stole *the untended oxen* at Fonthill, by which he was completely ruined, and drove them to Chicklade, *and there he was discovered, and the man who tracked him rescued the traced cattle* [?]. Then he fled, and a bramble scratched him in the face; and when he wished to deny it, that was brought as evidence against him.⁴⁴

A fresh reading of this passage has been offered by Gretsch, whose views must at present be considered authoritative (despite contrary analysis of the passage by Hough, with a rejoinder by Gretsch), since they form the basis of the translation adopted by Nicholas Brooks in his preliminary publication of the Fonthill Letter as it is to appear in the forthcoming edition of the Christ Church charters. Brooks's translation reads as follows:

Then after that — I know not whether after a year and a half or two years — he stole *the wretched oxen* at Fonthill, by which he was completely ruined, and drove them to Chicklade, *where he was apprehended; and his drover* [*'spear-man'*] *recovered the goads*. When he fled, a bramble scratched him on the face. When he wished to refute [the charge], that was said in proof against him.⁴⁵

It is impossible to penetrate to the crux of the matter, the meaning of MS *sporwreclas* (translated in these two excerpts as either 'the traced cattle [?]' or 'the

⁴³ Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 78 (italics added).

⁴⁴ *English Historical Documents*, trans. by Whitelock, vol. I, no. 102 (pp. 544–56), at p. 545 (italics added); the bracketed question mark is hers. Whitelock's translation is accepted by Keynes, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 78, with one inconsequential change in the last sentence (to 'When he fled, a bramble scratched him in the face').

⁴⁵ See Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter'; Hough, 'Cattle-Tracking'; Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter'; and Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaaf and Anglo-Saxon Law'. The quotation is from Brooks, pp. 304–05 (italics added); the two bracketed additions are his.

goads', respectively), without at the same time formulating a judgement as to the meaning of other key words in the passage, namely (1) *unledan* (translated above either 'untended' or 'wretched'), (2) *aparade* (translated either 'discovered' or 'apprehended'), (3) *speremon* (translated either 'the man who tracked him' or 'his drover [spear-man]'), and (4) *ahredde* (translated either 'rescued' or 'recovered'). It will be best to take up these terms in that order before then turning to the key term, MS *spor wreclas*, which I shall argue is a scribal mistake.

(1) *ða unledan oxan*. To begin with, Hough makes a brilliant case that the author does indeed mean to refer to 'the untended oxen' or 'the stray oxen', as has long been thought,⁴⁶ not 'the wretched oxen', as Gretsch maintains.⁴⁷ The dispute between these two respected scholars is an instructive one. Gretsch appeals to the lexical authority of Ferdinand Holthausen, who identifies the Old English adjective *unlāde* 'unfortunate, wretched' as a lexeme separate from the verb *lādan* 'to lead', relating it instead to Gothic *unlēps* 'poor'. She thus construes the word in the Fonthill Letter as an evaluating adjective, one that is expressive of Ordlafr's frame of mind as he refers to 'the wretched cattle' that were the occasion for this whole miserable business (for there is no reason for Ordlafr to call the cattle literally unfortunate). The word thus, in Gretsch's view, expresses Ordlafr's 'frustration and annoyance' and can even be called an 'outburst of anger'.⁴⁸ This is possible. Hough, however, shows with patient exactitude that the adjective *unlāde* is used in such a way, in its various Old English contexts, as to mean primarily 'misled' and hence, but only in a secondary sense, 'unfortunate'. In particular, the word is regularly used in the homilies to designate the Jewish antagonists of Christ⁴⁹ — those who have 'gone astray', from a Christian perspective, rather than just being unfortunate. An even more instructive example, though it derives from a later period, occurs in the *Proverbs of Alfred*, where it is said in misogynistic fashion that a man is *vnlede* who follows a woman's advice.⁵⁰ Here *vnlede* clearly means 'misled' as well as 'unfortunate'. Hough suggests, though she does not press the point, that the form

⁴⁶ Hough, 'Cattle-Tracking', pp. 883–87. Cf. B-T, s.v. *un-lāde*, glossed there with a question mark as 'stray (?)'. Thorpe, *Diplomatarium Anglicum*, p. 172, takes the word to mean 'unguarded'. Various other translators have adopted some version of 'stray'.

⁴⁷ Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', pp. 88–89, and 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 682–83, followed by Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlafr and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 311 n. 20.

⁴⁸ Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 683.

⁴⁹ As indeed Gretsch acknowledges in passing ('Language of the Fonthill Letter', p. 89).

⁵⁰ Hough, 'Cattle Tracking', p. 886, quoting *Proverbs of Alfred* from *Early Middle English Texts*, ed. by Bruce Dickins and R. M. Wilson (New York, 1951), p. 80.

unlāde may represent a reduced form of **ungelāded*, a negative adjective formed from the past participle of *lādan*.

I find Hough's reasoning persuasive and her examples instructive. Her etymological suggestion about **ungelāded*, while not crucial to her argument, is plausible as well. In their ignorance of the modern science of Germanic philology, native speakers like Ordlaſ might easily have understood the verb *lādan* 'to lead' and the negative adjective *unlāde* 'misled', hence 'unfortunate', to be related, given the similar meaning and pronunciation of those two lexical items. Folk etymology based on phonetic association is a way of thinking about words whose appeal, for medievals, seems to have been irresistible.⁵¹

As for Ealdorman's Ordlaſ's tone at this point, such things are very hard to pin down, but it seems plausible that, more than simply venting his frustration or anger, what Ordlaſ is trying to do is to make sure, even if very delicately, that the King is in possession of some important information. This is that the cattle that Helmstan was found guilty of stealing were not rustled from someone else's pasture, nor were they stolen from under a drover's nose; rather, they were collected when astray on what was in some sense Helmstan's own land (that is, the land that Helmstan was now leasing from his godfather at Fonthill). This was a mitigating circumstance that, in a different world, might have earned the accused man a verdict of 'innocent', assuming that he had not previously lost his power to defend himself.

One additional point is worth making, and that is that since the force of the negative *un-* in Old English is often vigorously negative rather than being privative (cf. the use, in paragraph 3 of the Fonthill Letter, of the noun *undēd* to mean 'crime'),⁵² perhaps the phrase *ða unlēden oxan* hints that the oxen had been *misdirected* onto the lands at Fonthill. In other words, perhaps the beasts were not just wandering around untended; rather, an incompetent drover may have misled

⁵¹ In a personal communication of 15 November 2009, Hough notes that 'the appeal also extends to moderns, not just medievals, as reflected in recent work in linguistics on cognitive polysemy as opposed to historical polysemy'. The argument that the adjective *unlāde* and the verb *lādan* might have been cognitively related in the minds of speakers of Old English is of course not a philological argument (as Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter', accepts though in a negative manner: 'this alone is not a philological argument', p. 681) but rather a linguistic one. I am grateful to Hough for her comment on this point and for several other suggestions for the improvement of the present paper.

⁵² Compare the use in modern English of the nominal phrase 'the undead' to denote 'revenants', not just 'people who are not dead'.

them onto the property at Fonthill (or, for lack of proper skill or attention, may have allowed them to stray there). This would have stood out as another mitigating factor, since the cattle could have done some damage there. As I have said, though, Ordlaſ is not trying to reopen the case; he is simply summarizing it in terms that might reflect his personal perspective.

(2) *ond hine mon ðæret aparade*. Brooks is correct, I believe, in taking the succeeding clause to mean ‘and there he was apprehended’, rather than ‘and there he was discovered’, as Whitelock, Keynes, Gretsċ, Hough, and others would read it. Since the definition given for the verb *ā-parian* in the *Dictionary of Old English* is ‘to discover; apprehend’, this in itself does not resolve the question. The word occurs only twice in the corpus of Old English,⁵³ and so one must look to those two contexts to try to construe it.

In one of these instances, from the West Saxon version of the Gospel of John (8.3), the verb is used of the woman taken in the act of adultery (*on unrihtthæmede*, another vigorous *un-* construction). A group of Pharisees and scribes is leading her up to be judged. It is not just that her crime is discovered; she has been caught *in flagrante delicto*, it seems, and is under physical constraint. The other occurrence of the word is in the present passage. According to my understanding, it is not just that Helmstan’s crime was *discovered*; more than that, like the woman taken in adultery, Helmstan was *caught red-handed* herding the oxen and was taken into custody on the spot (OE *ðæret*, best translated ‘thereat’ or ‘on the spot’ and not just ‘there’). His reaction was to flee his captors — a desperate but perhaps understandable response if these men were his deadly enemies, regardless of the question of his guilt. His flight must have been a precipitous one. One can well imagine him having plunged through a hedge of brambles that deterred pursuit.⁵⁴ A stronger translation than ‘discovered’ is thus required if one is to make sense of this passage. Helmstan was ‘apprehended’, then fled his captors, then later denied his guilt.

(3) *his speremon*. Gretsċ takes the noun *speremon*, which is otherwise unattested, to be related to the word *spere* ‘spear’, and hence she translates that word ‘drover’.⁵⁵ The consensus view, which is defended by Hough at length and quite persuasively with attention to evidence from the Continent,⁵⁶ is that the *speremon*

⁵³ See the *DOE*, s.v. *ā-parian*.

⁵⁴ An encounter with a single bramble is less likely and would explain his escape less well.

⁵⁵ Gretsċ, ‘Language of the Fonthill Letter’, pp. 84–87, and ‘The Fonthill Letter’, pp. 672–80, followed by Brooks, ‘The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlaſ and Anglo-Saxon Law’, p. 311, n. 21.

⁵⁶ Hough, ‘Cattle Tracking’, pp. 865–81.

of the Fonthill Letter had nothing to do with spears but much to do with tracking. The related Old English verb is *spyrian* ‘to track, trace’ (cf. Scottish *speer*, *speir* ‘to inquire into’, Old High German *spuren*, *spurien*, and Old Icelandic *spyrja*). The phrase *his speremon* must mean ‘the one who investigated or tracked him’ (with the objective genitive *his*). In the Kentish glosses, *speriend* glosses Latin *investigator*, and it is plausible to take *speriend* and *speremon* as virtual synonyms.

Any doubts on this score should be put to rest when one takes into account the close association of *speremon* with *sporwreclas* in this same sentence, where we are told that *his speremon abredde ða sporwreclas*. Whatever the disputed term *sporwreclas* means (see below), there can be little doubt that the initial simplex of the word is *spor* ‘trace, track’, as in modern English ‘spoor’. Although Gretsch argues that the initial simplex may actually be *spora* or *spura* ‘spur’, hence ‘goad’, she is alone in that conclusion, I believe, except that her authority is accepted by Brooks.⁵⁷ Her suggestion seems to me untenable given the frequent association of *spor* with cattle theft in the Anglo-Saxon laws. There are eleven provisions in the Anglo-Saxon law codes that attempt to regulate the tracking of missing cattle, and in five instances the word *spor* is used to refer to the tracks.⁵⁸ No word like *spora* or *spura* ‘spur’ occurs in this connection. Moreover, and quite significantly, there are several instances in the laws where the verb *bespyrgan* or *aspyrgan* or *gespyrian*, all of these forms being virtually equivalent to *spyrian*, is used in close conjunction with the noun *spor*. The following provision, for example, governs the procedure to be followed when the trail of the missing cattle leads out of one shire into a neighbouring one:

Gif man *spor gespirige* of scyre on oðre, fon þa menn to þe þar nycst syndon & drifan þæt *spor*, oð hit man þam gerefan gecyðe: fo he syððan to mid his monunge & adrife þæt *spor* ut of his scire, gif he mage.⁵⁹

[If the tracks [*spor*] are traced out from one shire into another, then the nearest neighbours shall be obligated to help, and they shall follow the tracks until the reeve is informed. Then he, along with the men who are subject to his summons, shall take on the task and, if he can, he shall follow the tracks [until they go] out of his shire.]

⁵⁷ Gretsch, ‘Language of the Fonthill Letter’, pp. 87–90. Hough, ‘Cattle Tracking’, p. 882, takes up aspects of her argument and finds it unconvincing.

⁵⁸ Gretsch herself, in the course of her meticulous discussion of this issue, cites these instances (p. 89, n. 170) without, however, giving them particular weight. They are V Æthelstan, chap. 2; VI Æthelstan, chaps 8.4 (four times), 8.7, and 8.8; and the Law of the People of Dunsæte, chap. 1. See F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–16), I, 168–69, 174–77, 180–81, and 374–75, respectively.

⁵⁹ VI Æthelstan 8.4, quoted from Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, I, 179.

The point relevant to the Fonthill Letter is that, short of catching a cattle thief red-handed, tracing the *spor* of the cattle was the chief means (and just about the only means) by which the thief might be apprehended and the animals recovered. To judge from the first part of the passage just cited, there were apparently some people in Anglo-Saxon rural communities, distinct from the common crowd, who were known for their skills at tracking cattle and who were therefore the first to be called in when cattle went missing and/or were feared stolen. In principle, the tracker would determine the spoor before a posse set out in pursuit. Particularly in a pastoral economy like that of west Wiltshire, landowners must have valued people who had such skills. Hough points out evidence, culled from a number of early Germanic sources, that skilled trackers were known in the early northern world. She makes a convincing case that the Fonthill *speremon* was just such a person, whether or not one accepts her suggestion that tracking cattle was a profession rather than being one of several skills that a handy person might have.⁶⁰

To return to the main story, then, the *speremon* who was called in to deal with the cattle at Chicklade was able to trace the route by which they had arrived there, and this evidence was used to accuse Helmstan of theft. That we find the Kentish spelling *speremon* here (cf. the West Saxon verb *spyrian* ‘to investigate’) seems to me inconsequential.⁶¹ As we have seen, there are more than a few textual anomalies in the Fonthill Letter, and Kenticisms (like other non–West Saxon forms) are often found in texts that are dominantly West Saxon in language and origin, as is not surprising seeing that the kingdom of Kent was absorbed by Wessex almost a hundred years before the Fonthill Letter was written down.

(4) *abredde*. It is hard to determine what *abredde* means in this same sentence without knowing what is denoted by that verb’s apparent object, MS *spor wreclas*. Rather than taking *abredde* to mean ‘rescued’, as Whitelock does, Hough takes the word to mean ‘recovered’, and she is followed by Brooks in this regard.⁶² While this semantic distinction is not a major one, Hough appears to be right, to judge from the sense that the verb *ā-breddan* bears elsewhere in the Old English records.⁶³ She

⁶⁰ In the personal communication cited in note 51 above, Hough writes that ‘I think you are right about cattle-tracking being a sideline rather than a profession’. The point does not seem essential to resolve, however.

⁶¹ Gretsich, ‘The Fonthill Letter’, argues otherwise, in keeping with her understanding that the initial simplex of *speremon* is the word for ‘spear’.

⁶² Hough, ‘Cattle Tracking’, pp. 887–92; Brooks’s translation is quoted above.

⁶³ See the DOE, s.v. *ā-breddan*, sense 3, ‘to recover, capture (what has been taken)’.

calls particular attention to an instance in the laws where that word is used in the context of cattle theft:

Æt ælcon ðeofstolenan orfe 7 be his [...] forfange sylle, þæt is æt ælcon scill' penig, sy ðæs cynnes orf ðe hit sy, gyf hit man æt ðeofes handa *abret*.⁶⁴

While it is not easy to squeeze out the sense of this passage, what I believe it means is the following:

As regards all stolen cattle and concerning its [restitution?], one penny shall be given in reward for its confiscation on every shilling [of the animal's value], no matter what type of beast it is, as long as it is *recovered* at the thief's hands.

What is envisioned here, as is clear from the Latin paraphrases printed by Liebermann and from the next provision of the law, is that someone who confiscates stolen cattle has a right to be paid one penny per head, as long as the cattle are recovered right from the thief. Simply picking up stray animals, or ones that had been sequestered elsewhere, does not qualify one for this reward, though a lesser one might be forthcoming. This provision may have a bearing on our understanding of the events that transpired at Fonthill, for it suggests that an unscrupulous person could have profited by confiscating the cattle at Chicklade and charging Helmstan with having stolen them. This is true even though, in the clause that is under consideration from the Fonthill Letter, the object of the verb 'recovered' is not the cattle themselves, as is usually assumed. Instead, as we shall see, it was their trail that was recovered, for the cattle would seem already to have been in custody.

(5) *ða sporwreclas*. This brings us to the crucial point, the interpretation of MS *sporwreclas*. As we have seen, this appears to be a compound noun, the first simplex of which is *spor* 'track, spoor'. The second simplex, *wreclas*, cannot well be construed. Neither that plural form, nor the corresponding postulated singular form **wrecl*, has any parallels whatsoever, whether in Old English or in related languages. The word as written is a mystery, and I suggest that it would always have been so, even to native speakers of Old English, whether or not they would have found reason to agonize over it as much as modern scholars have done.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Hough, 'Cattle Tracking', p. 890, citing chap. 3 of the tenth-century legal text known as *Forfang*, which treats the lawful seizure of stolen property (*italics added*). I cite the text from Liebermann, *Gesetze*, I, 390. The text is defective at one point.

⁶⁵ Although Gretsche, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', finds 'good grounds for believing that virtually all obscure passages in the text are obscure only to the modern reader, but were not so to the recipient of the letter' (p. 90), this phrase would seem to be an exception.

Relying on the immediate context to resolve this enigma, Whitelock tentatively takes *sporwreclas* to refer to the cattle, as most other modern readers have done, though no one has given a compelling account of how this meaning is to be derived linguistically.⁶⁶ Gretsch has gingerly suggested several alternative translations, including 'goads', 'yokes', and 'dogs' (in the sense of hounds set on the spoor), and Brooks has adopted her suggestion 'goads' even though she does not particularly favour that reading herself.⁶⁷ Hough, on the other hand, has tried to salvage 'cattle', proposing that *spor-wreclas* might have been a technical term pertaining to the legal register. She thus postulates that *sporwreclas* has the specific meaning 'stolen cattle recovered through tracking'.⁶⁸ Neither of the two favoured solutions, neither 'cattle' (whether viewed as a technical term or not) nor 'goads', seems to me much better than a shot in the dark. The appeal of 'goads' diminishes sharply, in fact, if one is unpersuaded by Gretsch's twofold attempts to relate *speremon* to *sperē* 'spear' rather than *spyrian* 'to track' and to relate the first simplex of the compound *sporwreclas* to *spora* 'spur' rather than *spor* 'track, spoor'.

My own hope to resolve this crux starts out from different terrain: namely, the rich and fertile ground of error.⁶⁹ What has happened in this part of the Fonthill Letter, I suggest, is that a scribe has written *wreclas* out of ignorance or confusion, when what was meant by the author of the letter was a different word, *wrencas*, a plural noun meaning 'wiles, tricks'. The full word that the scribe should have written is *sporwrencas*, meaning 'the wily twists and turns of the track'.

Although **spor-wrencas* is not attested elsewhere (so that it must remain an asterisked form), its constituent elements are transparent. The second simplex, *wrenc* (plural *wrencas*), is a well-attested Old English noun meaning 'trick, artifice, wile, stratagem'. The related verb *wrencan* means either 'to turn, twist' or 'to practice

⁶⁶ The hypothesized singular form **wrecel* has been derived from the verb *wrecan* 'to drive', thus yielding the postulated sense, in the plural, 'animals that are driven along', but no one has been so hardy as to stand by this as a philological argument.

⁶⁷ Gretsch, 'Language of the Fonthill Letter', pp. 87–90, and 'The Fonthill Letter', pp. 680–81; Brooks, 'The Fonthill Letter, Ealdorman Ordlafe and Anglo-Saxon Law', p. 311.

⁶⁸ Hough, 'Cattle Tracking', pp. 881–83. Gretsch, 'The Fonthill Letter', p. 681, objects that this reading is no more than an extrapolation from the specific context.

⁶⁹ This ground has recently been delved in fascinating detail by Seth Lerer, *Error and the Academic Self: The Scholarly Imagination, Medieval to Modern* (New York, 2002). Though scribal error is not one of Lerer's leading concerns, he calls attention to laments about scribal bungling that authors voiced from the time of Martial, to the twelfth-century poet Baudri of Bourgueil, to Petrarch and Chaucer (pp. 18–19).

wiles, use tricks'.⁷⁰ In Middle English, the corresponding verb *wrencen* means anything from 'to twist, turn' or 'to change course, deviate' (or 'cause to deviate, divert') to 'to contrive (a ploy)'.⁷¹ It seems reasonable to ascribe to **spor-wrencas* both the physical sense of changing course and the metaphorical sense of using wiles. Although I see no reason to think that **spor-wrencas* was a technical term, it must have been an out-of-the-way one. It may conceivably have been the author's invention, since little linguistic creativity would have been required to form it. In any event, one should not be surprised that the scribe misunderstood the word, particularly if he was a cleric with no particular familiarity with the language of cattle theft and the legal protocols that governed the tracing of lost beasts.

What is being said, then, is that thanks to the effort of the *speremon*, the route taken by the cattle was recovered, despite all the twists and turns that were meant to conceal it. A translation of the whole passage, incorporating this proposed emendation, can now be offered:

Then on top of that — I do not know whether it was a year and a half or two years later — he stole the untended oxen at Fonthill, by which he was completely ruined, and drove them to Chicklade, *and therat he was apprehended, and the man who traced him* [that is, who traced his prior route with the cattle] *recovered the wily twists and turns of the track*. When he fled, a bramble scratched him in the face; and when he wished to deny it [the charge of cattle theft], that was brought as evidence against him.

To sum up paragraph 10 of the letter, the gist of the matter is that Helmstan was ruined because he was found guilty of cattle theft. What sealed the verdict against him was the tell-tale mark on his face. The underlying story is that he stole — or, perhaps, from his own perspective, only 'rounded up' — some stray oxen at Fonthill and drove them to Chicklade. There he was apprehended, and from there he fled from his captors, receiving a scratch on the face as he scrambled away through some brambles. A tracker was able to recover the route along which the cattle had come, however, even though Helmstan had tried to conceal it. Helmstan's guilt was thus established in two ways. First there was the tracker's evidence, and then — more sensationally, it seems — there was the scratch on Helmstan's face, which was taken as proof that he had fled arrest. We do not hear Helmstan's versions of these events, but these are the facts as Ealdorman Ordlafe accepts them to be.

⁷⁰ B-T, s.v. *wrenc*, *wrencan*. Compare the modern English reflex 'wrench', both the verb and the noun (as in the American term 'monkey wrench', equivalent to British 'spanner').

⁷¹ See the *MED*, s.v. *wrencen*, meanings (a), (c), and (e), respectively.

The Scribe's Mistake

One question remains. How could the scribe have slipped up so badly?

This is a good question, but not one that can well be answered. The sun rises in the east. Scribes make mistakes. These are two of the cardinal principles pertaining to the manuscript culture of the Middle Ages. Both precepts are worthy of being included in such a poem as the *Cotton Maxims*, where we learn such other truths as 'clouds glide along' (*wolcnu scriðað*) and 'winter is the coldest season' (*winter byð cealdost*).⁷²

Errors of transmission are particularly to be anticipated in a context where texts are dictated. As is well known, dictation was a common practice during the Middle Ages in any number of situations where texts were replicated, not just in an Anglo-Saxon ealdorman's household. If a text has been dictated aloud at some point in the course of its transmission, then mistakes stemming from the mishearing of a person's spoken words can coexist with errors that relate to the eye, the pen, and the hand. As for the Fonthill Letter, a text like this, if it was dictated by Ordlaaf, would probably have been recorded first on wax tablets (as has been noted above) before being transferred to parchment. Marks made quickly in wax, it is fair to assume, might sometimes have been problematic to construe compared with texts written out in ink on a pricked and lineated surface. In the heat of dictation, scribes may have made use of abbreviations to a greater extent, or in a less systematic way, than in fair copies of vernacular texts, where abbreviations are generally kept to a minimum (compared with what we see with Latin texts, where abbreviations are much more common). This could have led to unexpected problems of interpretation when notes that were inscribed in wax, perhaps abbreviated in some manner, were then written out on parchment. With luck, the author of the letter would have been available in the next room to resolve such questions, but a man like Ealdorman Ordlaaf would have had many different rooms and responsibilities, and the Fonthill estate (though he clearly cared about it) may not have ranked at the top of his list of worries.

Even leaving dictation aside as a special problem, errors easily make their way into handwritten copies and lodge there to stay, uncorrected by subsequent readers. The manuscript culture of Anglo-Saxon England represents nothing exceptional in that regard. In the words of Kenneth Sisam, even 'glaring errors' made by Anglo-Saxon scribes who 'were often ignorant, or inattentive to the meaning'

⁷² *Maxims II*, verses 13b and 5b, respectively; *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR, 6 (New York, 1942), pp. 55–57.

were left to stand.⁷³ He therefore makes a case for freer use of conjectural emendation than editors have sometimes allowed themselves.⁷⁴ In a fascinating book with the workaday title *The Transmission of Old English Poetry*, Peter Orton has made a systematic study of the unreliability of Anglo-Saxon scribes, offering an account of what he calls 'the pathology of copying' by sorting it out into such different types of errors as confusion of minims, confusion of other letters, dittography, haplography, homoeoteleuton, transpositions, misinterpretation of unusual letter forms, omissions, and additions of letters or words, among other categories. Although his subject in that book is the copying of poetry (so that his examples all pertain to that sphere), most of what he has to say about mechanical error applies to copying across the board, whether of verse or of prose. One of his conclusions is that, although many copying errors (e.g. minim errors) are easy to explain in terms of the forms that are likely to have provoked them, there also exist 'many examples of corruptions that, though difficult to explain except as copying errors, seem nevertheless unlikely palaeographically'.⁷⁵

The corruption of **sporwrencas* to MS *spor wreclas* would seem to fall into this class of error, for there is no easy way to explain such a change as a result of a mechanical slip. One might speculate endlessly as to just what went wrong. The scribe might have had trouble hearing or conscientiously copying the consonant *n*, to begin with; we have already seen that he wrote *mire* for *minre*.⁷⁶ Some confusion might have come about because the scribe had in his mind's eye or ear a not wholly dissimilar word, such as *wrac-lastas* 'paths of exile'. This compound noun

⁷³ Kenneth Sisam, 'The Authority of Old English Poetical Manuscripts', chap. 2 of his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 29–44 (p. 38), first published in *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 257–68.

⁷⁴ Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, esp. p. 44. Compare a similar argument offered yet more emphatically by Michael Lapidge, 'On the Emendation of Old English Texts', in *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. by D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 53–67. Lapidge argues, in opposition to what he perceives to be a rising tide of ultraconservatism in editorial theory and practice, that 'We have a responsibility as editors to conserve the transmitted text when it is sound, but [...] to emend it when it is not. There is no need to shrink from emendation' (p. 67).

⁷⁵ Peter Orton, *The Transmission of Old English Poetry* (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 193 and 194, respectively.

⁷⁶ Sometimes, for the sake of grammatical convenience, I use the pronoun 'he' to refer to the scribe of the Fonthill Letter or to any scribe, even though in principle, the 'he' may have been either male or female. The question of female literacy during this period, though interesting in its own right, is irrelevant to my discussion.

occurs eight times in the poetic corpus, always in the plural form, twice with the alternate spelling *wrec-lastas*.⁷⁷ This word does have a semantic relation to the sentence in the Fonthill Letter, for what is being discussed at this point is the set of tracks (or paths) made by some cattle, while Helmstan was indeed declared an outlaw (or exile) as a result of this episode. Such an association might have led to the scribe's writing *wreclas* in place of *wrencas*, adding the consonant *l* of *wreclastas* but not the final syllable (*-tas*) of that word. In truth, though, speculations of this kind seem fruitless. After all, the source text might have been marred, so that all that could be made out was something along the lines of *spor wre...as*, leaving the scribe confused though plunging ahead.

One of the most illuminating parts of Orton's book, in that connection, is his chapter on 'The Confused Scribe' (pp. 57–97). Orton makes clear that scribes did not always understand the language they were copying. This notion may seem a strange one to some of us, since one sometimes hears modern scholars asserting categorically that the Anglo-Saxons must have understood what a difficult passage meant even if we moderns cannot; but there is much evidence to show that this is a false assumption. At times, the howlers that scribes committed can fuel doubts as to whether or not copyists lived on the same planet as authors. The frequent reason for a scribe's confusion when copying a verse text, Orton shows, is that he failed to understand a rare word restricted to the poetic lexicon. This was true, for example, of the scribe of the version of *The Battle of Brunanburh* that occurs in MS D of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B IV), where we find such errors as *heowan heora flyman* 'they cut down their fugitives' instead of *heowan herefleman* 'they cut down the fugitives from battle' (verse 23a); *eald in wuda* 'old in the woods' instead of *eald inwidde* 'the old guileful one' (verse 46a); and *gewiton him þa norðmen dæg gled on garum* 'then the Norsemen departed, day-gleed (?) on spears' instead of *gewitan hym þa Norþmen nægledcnearrum* 'then the Norsemen departed in clinker-built ships' (line 53).⁷⁸

It will be noticed that in the three examples just cited, what caused the scribe to stumble — and, in the last instance, to take a bad fall — was his ignorance of a rare or unique word that is either a compound noun (*here-flema*, *nægled-cnearr*) or

⁷⁷ At *Christ and Satan* 120, 127, and 257; *The Wanderer* 5 and 32; *The Seafarer* 57; *Beowulf* 1352; and *The Death of Edward* 17. I am grateful to Matt Hussey for offering the suggestion raised here.

⁷⁸ Orton, *Transmission of Old English Poetry*, p. 59; cf. *Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. by Dobbie, pp. 16–20. I take the text as edited by Dobbie as the source of the normative readings. 'Gleed' is an old word for 'red-hot coal'.

a noun that is compound-like in its construction (*inwidda*). While, once again, these are poetic words whereas **spor-wrencas* is not, the same principle holds true: unusual compound words are easily misunderstood.

The fact is, scribal error is a commonplace phenomenon in the texts of this period. As we have seen, the Fonthill scribe made a number of mistakes (whether of omission or of commission) in the course of his stint. Either he or, conceivably, another person was observant enough to correct most of those errors, though several mistakes were left as is. It is possible that the meaningless manuscript reading *spor wreclas* was left uncorrected because, if the source text had become unavailable or was itself garbled, no one handling the letter had the temerity to change the wording as it stood. Indeed, Alastair Campbell's comment regarding the last-cited of the errors made by the scribe of the D text of *Brunanburh* is worth repeating in this connection:

It would be idle to speculate what were the steps by which it [this particular corruption] arose, but it is instructive to consider how helpless any editor would be in the face of such an error in a work preserved in one MS only: if he did solve it, universal condemnation for audacity would be his only reward.⁷⁹

Any person of the Anglo-Saxon period who contemplated improving this part of the Fonthill Letter would have coveted no such reward. Less than keen on earning such rewards myself, I will bring this section to a close, reasonably confident that 'ȝ his speremon ahredde ða sporwrencas' is what the scribe of the Fonthill Letter ought to have written in paragraph 10 but without access to Ealdorman Ordlaſ's actual words, and hence grateful that it is my purpose only to comment on the letter, not to edit it. That is a task that Nicholas Brooks and Susan Kelly are taking on, with the thanks and the sincere good will of us all.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the present resolution of the manuscript crux *spor wreclas* will open the way to new insights into a cluster of controversies relating to this part of the Fonthill Letter. If my readings of this passage are accepted, then a ghost word is banished from the Old English lexicon, some additional linguistic confusion is avoided, and a clearer picture is gained of what was involved in what has been

⁷⁹ *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Alistair Campbell (London, 1938), p. 114; Orton, *Transmission of Old English Poetry*, p. 60.

described as ‘the longest and one of the liveliest’ of the legal documents that survive from this period.⁸⁰

The key notion underlying my analysis is that a semi-professional scribe, perhaps a priest, working in an Anglo-Saxon nobleman’s household could easily have garbled this passage out of ignorance of language pertaining to the domain of cattle tracking and cattle theft, or through a mistake in writing that had to do with the threefold chain of transmission from *spoken word* to *wax tablets* to *vellum*. Some combination of these factors could well have been involved.

This discussion of a disputed passage in the Fonthill Letter, in turn, may contribute something to our understanding of the scribal culture of early tenth-century Wessex, particularly as regards the secular contexts in which workaday vernacular texts were transmitted, sometimes through a process involving oral dictation. Since so little is known about that subject, and since it is of considerable significance given the unprecedented explosion of English vernacular writings during the course of the tenth century, my comments may have some interest beyond the merely philological. They point to the conclusion that King Alfred’s educational reforms are unlikely to have had an immediate and dramatic effect among high-ranking laymen, even though the applications of vernacular literacy were becoming increasingly pervasive. For a man like Ealdorman Ordlafr to have made use of the services of a scribe in the course of these events is a phenomenon worthy of note, for it indicates that he and King Edward the Elder were members of a loose-knit textual community that spanned the divide between the clergy and the secular aristocracy. This community would have included persons of quite different degrees of literacy, from the unlettered to the learned.

As for Helmstan — the luckless protagonist of this drama — in the end it is hard to know just what to make of him. His reiterated brazen thefts, if that is what they were, are matched by the vehemence with which he seems to have persisted in maintaining his innocence, even to the point of being outlawed, when another man might have caved in and offered to settle the case. He attracts one’s admiration, if not necessarily one’s sympathy, in much the same way as mavericks and outlaws do in any era.⁸¹ Moreover, Helmstan’s enemies, spearheaded by Æthelhelm Higa, excite some interest in their own right, whether seen as victims or as persecutors. Certainly they seem to have shown a teeth-clenching ruthlessness in their

⁸⁰ Wormald, *Making of English Law*, p. 145.

⁸¹ A stimulating analysis of this phenomenon is offered by Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 4th edn (New York, 2000).

attempt to ruin Helmstan and gain his lands. As for Ealdorman Ordlaſ, although he presents his own past actions in the most honourable light, it is hard to avoid the impression that there is more to his side of the story, too, than he is willing to tell. He seems to have been a man who knew when to speak and when to stay silent, and this quality must have helped him secure the power that he enjoyed under two kings. Not far below the surface of his narrative, one perceives a scene in which rival families are poised to grab whatever lands or wealth they can, whenever the grabbing is good.

While thinking about these people, I am reminded of a Western movie I saw when I was a child. A man in a frontier town was hung for having committed a terrible crime, but then it turned out that a mistake had been made. Someone else was discovered to have been the guilty party. The sheriff, however, was unconcerned about this miscarriage of justice. 'Well,' he said with a shrug, 'if he dint deserve hangin for that, he prob'ly deserved hangin for somethin else.'

I am not sure if I remember this scene right, and now I wonder if I have imagined it. In any event, it's another good story, and the sheriff's attitude may have some application to the society glimpsed through the vigorous, though not wholly transparent, prose of the Fonthill Letter.

THE BLICKLING HOMILIES REVISITED: KNOWABLE AND PROBABLE USES OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, MS SCHEIDE 71

Jonathan Wilcox

Princeton University Library, MS Scheide 71 is a remarkable Anglo-Saxon manuscript both for its contents and for its material form. It contains a sequence of eighteen Old English homilies (the Blickling Homilies) that have long been recognized for their contribution to early Anglo-Saxon preaching. It also preserves many signs of the creation and use of the book, including a sequence of Anglo-Saxon quire signatures and a wealth of later user marks. Given the importance of the collection and the richness of the material evidence, the details of this manuscript are well worth revisiting, particularly as there is little contemporary agreement about such fundamental issues as the date or place of origin or the use of the collection. As is only appropriate in a festschrift for A. N. Doane, a master of manuscript observation, I will suggest that close attention to the materiality of the manuscript can help further understanding of the collection. In this essay I will survey controversies about the Blickling Homilies and suggest inferences about their possible place of origin and their use based on the material record.¹

MS Scheide 71 contains a fragmentary collection of Old English preaching texts, first a temporale and then a sanctorale sequence, now starting partway through an Annunciation homily and serving occasional Sundays and festivals through Lent, Easter, Rogationtide, Ascension, Pentecost, and the Assumption of

¹ My analysis is based on examination of the manuscript in 2003 and 2008, for access to which I thank Paul Needham, Librarian of the Scheide collection, and the staff of Princeton University Library special collections. My full codicological description is published in *Homilies by Ælfric and Other Homilies*, ASMMF, 17 (Tempe, 2008), no. 439, pp. 127–40. I wish to warmly thank the general editors of that series, Matt Hussey and especially the honoree of this volume, Nick Doane.

the Virgin before continuing with a sequence of saints' lives comprising John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, Michael, Martin, and ending imperfectly partway through a life of Andrew. The scope of the original collection can partly be inferred from codicological evidence. The order of the quires was guaranteed at some early stage through a record of quire signatures comprising letters of the alphabet written at the foot of the last verso page of a quire. While many of these have been lost through cropping, 'P.' is visible at the foot of fol. 73^v at the end of what is now the tenth quire, 'U.' on fol. 110^v at the end of the fifteenth quire, and 'X.' on fol. 119^v at the end of the sixteenth quire. This and the gaps in content allow the reasonable inference that four quires are missing at the beginning and one after fol. 64, with unknown further loss from the end. It is therefore likely that the collection began with homilies for any or all of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, while the conclusion of the sanctorale sequence is not now knowable.²

The homilies were first edited by Richard Morris in a nineteenth-century Early English Text Society edition that remains serviceable but not entirely satisfactory.³ Morris faced the manuscript in such a disordered state that he published as a separate fragment what is in fact part of Blickling Homily 4, and he was not aware of all the textual variants of each homily.⁴ A more recent edition by Richard Kelly is wanting in many respects.⁵ The collection has been better served by facsimiles.

² *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Rudolph Willard, EEMF, 10 (Copenhagen, 1960), p. 25, made out the traces of four further letters in the sequence of quire signatures, including 'E' at fol. 8^v, at the end of the current first quire. Peter Clemoes speculates about the content of the original opening in his review of Willard, *Medium Ævum*, 31 (1962), 60–63. Nancy M. Thompson, 'The Carolingian *De festiuitatibus* and the Blickling Book', in *The Old English Homily: Precedent, Practice, and Appropriation*, ed. by Aaron J Kleist (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 97–119, makes an enlightening suggestion about the range of content as paralleling the important religious festivals marked out by Carolingian legislation.

³ *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Richard Morris, EETS, o.s. 58, 63, 73 (1874–80; repr. as one volume, London, 1967). Quotations are from this edition, cited by page and line number, checked against the manuscript, cited by folio and line number.

⁴ Morris's homily XVI, 'A Fragment', should be inserted into his homily IV at p. 53, line 2, and his homilies XVII–XIX are treated by later scholars as Blickling Homilies 16–18. On the variant copies, see D. G. Scragg, 'The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies and Prose Saints' Lives before Ælfric', *ASE*, 8 (1979), 223–77 (pp. 233–35).

⁵ Richard J. Kelly, *The Blickling Homilies: Edition and Translation* (London, 2003), fails to present any textual variants and includes in its eccentric apparatus many substantial passages taken directly from other scholars without attribution, often presenting contradictory positions that are left unresolved; see further my review in *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 604–07, and that of D. G. Scragg, *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 49 (2005), 69–72.

Rudolph Willard presented the manuscript in the Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile series in photographs taken while the manuscript was disbound and the leaves were being restored to an appropriate order for a rebinding during the late 1950s.⁶ In an exemplary introduction, Willard describes the codicology of the manuscript in detail and provides an invaluable deciphering of the marginalia added from the fourteenth century onwards. More recently, the manuscript has been reproduced digitally in its entirety as part of the Princeton University Digital Library, freely accessible on the web, where each page can be viewed in full colour and magnified for breathtaking detail, albeit with minimal commentary.⁷ It is also included in the Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile series, where my full codicological description accompanies older photographs of the manuscript.⁸

Dating the collection would seem to be unusually straightforward in view of a clear dating formula within the Ascension Day homily (Blickling 11). In pondering the unknowable time of Doomsday, the homilist refers to the passage of nine hundred and seventy one years in the present age: ‘ȝ þisse is þonne se mǣsta dǣl agangen, efne nigon hund wintra ȝ lxxi. on þys geare’.⁹ A version of this homily, then, was in circulation in 971, although it is possible, of course, that essentially the same homily may have circulated before 971 with this phrase updated in the retelling or recopying, or that the formula may have been copied unchanged from an exemplar in which it was once the correct date, thus leaving the correct date behind. Other manuscript evidence can help secure the date, although dating of the handwriting is not very precise. The homilies are written by two scribes whose script Ker assigns to s. x/xi, which suggests a date range of about the turn of the millennium, within a quarter century.¹⁰ Willard is unusually quiet about the date the Anglo-Saxon manuscript was compiled, but suggests in passing in his preface

⁶ *Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Willard.

⁷ See <<http://diglib.princeton.edu/>> for the whole project; <<http://pucl.princeton.edu/viewer.php?obj=x346d4176#page/1/mode/2up>> or <<http://pucl.princeton.edu/objects/x346d4176?>> for the Blickling Homilies.

⁸ See note 1 above. The accompanying microfiche images are taken from a microfilm made before the images printed by Willard and are significantly less satisfactory in quality than the digital images cited in the previous note.

⁹ Morris 119/1–2, fol. 72^r/10–11; ‘and the greatest portion of this has passed, even 971 winters in this year’.

¹⁰ N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with a suppl., 1990), pp. 451–55; see p. xx on interpreting the dating attributions.

an early eleventh-century date for the Anglo-Saxon material.¹¹ This seems needlessly dismissive of the dating formula on fol. 72^r, which receives some validation in that it was noteworthy enough to attract attention from a subsequent Anglo-Saxon annotator, described below.¹² Other codicological oddities may bear out the suggestion of a relatively early compilation, before certain conventions became standard in most scriptoria producing homiletic manuscripts: the order of hair and flesh sides lacks the consistent arrangement of hair against hair, flesh against flesh, common in most Anglo-Saxon homiletic manuscripts, and the quires may have been of variable length.¹³

In summary, Blickling Homily 11 was certainly performed in 971, although it may pre-date that, while the collection as a whole in its current form must date to or after 971, with some likelihood that it dates from that year. This makes it earlier than most surviving Old English homily collections, and it was probably assembled before the height of the Benedictine reform movement, which saw its focus in the *Regularis Concordia* of the early 970s, the ideology of which dominates most surviving Anglo-Saxon preaching texts.¹⁴ This relatively early date is borne out by the contents to the extent that the collection completely lacks works by Ælfric, whose homilies and saints' lives dominate most vernacular collections from the 990s onwards. Since the collection as a whole pre-dates the dissemination of Ælfric's homilies, it may represent the 'great error in many English books' which that prolific homilist explicitly intended to correct.¹⁵

While a date of perhaps 971 is likely for the composition of the manuscript as a whole, the collection is, however, made up of constituent parts which pre-date that. This process has been explained well by Donald Scragg, who has shown how

¹¹ Ker and Willard have influenced subsequent scholars: R. D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 2003), for example, suggest that 'although the manuscript can be assigned to ca. 1000, the texts themselves cannot be dated with any precision', even as they point out that the language of the homilies as a whole 'is archaic by comparison to that of Ælfric' (p. 73).

¹² Rowland Collins, *Anglo-Saxon Vernacular Manuscripts in America* (New York, 1976), pp. 52–57, takes the 971 date as descriptive of the manuscript.

¹³ See further Wilcox, *Homilies by Ælfric*, pp. 129–30, where I list some of the irregularities.

¹⁴ See, for example, Joyce Hill, 'The Benedictine Reform and Beyond', in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Oxford, 2001), pp. 151–69.

¹⁵ Ælfric sees his homilies as an antidote to 'mycel gedwyld on manegum Englisum bocum' in the Preface to his First Series of *Catholic Homilies*; see *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Durham, 1994), Preface 1b, line 8.

quiring, scribal practice, and spacing of the layout suggest that the homilies were copied in six distinct groups, namely quires containing homilies 1–3, homily 4, homilies 5–6, and homily 7 (all written by the first scribe and gathered into what Scragg considers block a, with some of the later parts written out before the earlier ones), homilies 8–15 (Scragg's block b), and homilies 16–18 (Scragg's block c).¹⁶ Scragg suggests that these subunits of the manuscript probably reflect distinct source texts drawn on by the compiler. M. J. Toswell supports Scragg's point with further attention to patterns of punctuation, and she adds the suggestion that marked signs of wear at the end of quires, particularly those which coincide with the separate units detected by Scragg, may indicate circulation of individual or small groups of homilies in booklets.¹⁷ The place of composition and of circulation will be considered below.

The Blickling Homilies present somewhat miscellaneous moral exhortation and catechetical teachings with a particular emphasis on the nature of judgement. There have been good studies of the eschatology apparent throughout the collection, of the colourful traditions used to support this, of the presentation of Mary, and of the treatment of the Jews in these homilies.¹⁸ One homily in the eschatological tradition, Blickling 16, a life of St Michael, has generated excited comparison with the poem *Beowulf* since the description of hell in the homily parallels the description of Grendel's mother's mere in the poem. Earlier critics saw this as definitive evidence that the homily drew from the poem or that the poem

¹⁶ D. G. Scragg, 'The Homilies of the Blickling Manuscript', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes*, ed. by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 299–316.

¹⁷ M. J. Toswell, 'The Codicology of Anglo-Saxon Homiletic Manuscripts, Especially the Blickling Homilies', in *The Old English Homily*, ed. by Kleist, pp. 209–26. The digital images to which reference is made in note 7 above never show the gutter of the book, but my own re-examination of sewing stations suggests that it is now impossible to establish evidence for an original Anglo-Saxon binding in the light of multiple subsequent medieval and modern rebindings.

¹⁸ On eschatology, see Milton McC. Gatch, 'Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies', *Traditio*, 21 (1965), 117–65 and *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 1977), and Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 32 (Cambridge, 2001); on the Irish tradition, see Charles D. Wright, *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 6 (Cambridge, 1993); on the Marian tradition, see Mary Clayton, 'Blickling Homily XIII Reconsidered', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 17 (1986), 25–40, and *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (Cambridge, 1990); on the figure of the Jews, see Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, 2004).

drew from the homily, with consequent implications for dating and composition,¹⁹ but Charles Wright provides a more convincing assessment that both homily and poem drew the description from the same account in a Latin *Visio Sancti Pauli*, an account of hell that circulated very widely, albeit often with changing details.²⁰ The posited connection with *Beowulf* has been recently picked up at a codicological level by Kevin Kiernan, who points to some similarities between the Blickling Homilies manuscript and the *Beowulf* manuscript in the script, grid layout, and irregular arrangements of quires, although the similarities have been insufficient to convince some later commentators.²¹

Place of Origin of the Blickling Homilies

The place of origin of the Blickling Homilies is not generally agreed upon. Textual evidence, while slight, has been seen as having a possible bearing on this question. Of the eighteen surviving Blickling Homilies, ten also survive in part or whole in another version. Mostly there is a lack of any significant textual overlap between Blickling and these other copies, as Scragg shows, particularly in the case of those manuscripts which can be localized in the south-east, but there is a suggestive textual affiliation with CCCC, MS 198, part II.²² This link has recently been reinforced by Mary Swan, who suggests that CCCC 198 may even copy directly from the Blickling Homilies manuscript.²³ The provenance of the Blickling

¹⁹ For the former, see Carleton F. Brown, 'Beowulf and the Blickling Homilies and Some Textual Notes', *PMLA*, 53 (1938), 905–16; for the latter, see Rowland L. Collins, 'Blickling Homily XVI and the Dating of Beowulf', in *Medieval Studies Conference Aachen 1983: Language and Literature*, ed. by Wolf-Dietrich Bald and Horst Weinstock (Frankfurt, 1983), pp. 61–69.

²⁰ See Wright, *Irish Tradition*, pp. 113–36. *Klaeber's Beowulf*, ed. by R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, 4th edn (Toronto, 2008), p. clxxviii, provides a recent reassessment of the issue with bibliographical references.

²¹ Kevin S. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick, 1981; rev. edn with a foreword by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. xix–xxii. For an unsympathetic reception, see Johan Gerritsen, 'Beowulf Revisited', *English Studies*, 79 (1998), 82–86, and Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to Beowulf* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 21–22.

²² See Scragg, 'Corpus of Vernacular Homilies', pp. 233–35, and 'Homilies of the Blickling Manuscript', esp. pp. 313–15.

²³ Swan, 'Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 198 and the Blickling Manuscript', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 37 (2006), 89–100, where she cautiously suggests Worcester or Hereford as possible places for the copying.

Homilies manuscript may be established, then, by the location of the copying of CCCC 198, part II. CCCC 198 began as a south-eastern collection, but part II has different affiliations and was added elsewhere, at an unknown centre, probably in an Anglian environment, finding its way to Worcester by the thirteenth century, when it was annotated by the scribe known as the Tremulous Hand. This textual clue, then, points to a likely Anglian provenance for the Blickling Homilies. This is consistent with the evidence of the language of the homilies, which linguistic commentators have identified as Anglian, and more specifically localizable to the East Midlands.²⁴

In order to localize the collection more precisely, it will be useful to consider the evidence for the later provenance of the manuscript. While the Blickling Homilies manuscript has acquired its enduring modern name from residing from 1740 to 1930 in Blickling Hall, Norfolk, the late medieval provenance (from at least 1304 until the eighteenth century) is firmly established as Lincoln as is clear from later annotations in the manuscript. The manuscript has been written all over with a series of later additions that fill margins and blank space and occasionally run into the text block.²⁵ This is the result of the manuscript having become a somewhat haphazard ledger for the recording of Lincoln city affairs and names, which are written into margins and other blank spaces. The earliest entry lists the roster of members of the Lincoln Common Council for 1304 (on the margin of fol. 1^v), while the latest dated entries include 'Martin Mason | belman 1608' at the foot of fol. 119^v and an entry from 1623 on the calendar at fol. v verso. Municipal records and names abound, along with other more miscellaneous marginalia, especially from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

These late medieval additions from Lincoln do not relate to the Old English texts, the language of which was presumably no longer comprehensible. The old texts presumably carried merely symbolic value, constituting a desirable location to leave a permanent record. Willard speculates that the manuscript's 'selection for use by the Common Council may have been governed by the fact that it was an ancient book, a religious book, that it is in the vernacular, and that it is both English and pre-Conquest'.²⁶ Similar use was made of a glossed psalter, the Blickling

²⁴ See Ashley K. Hardy, *Die Sprache der Blickling Homilien* (Leipzig, 1899); R. J. Menner, 'The Anglian Vocabulary of the Blickling Homilies', in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. by T. A. Kirby and H. B. Woolf (Baltimore, 1949), pp. 56–64; and Hans Schabram, *Superbia: Studien zum altenglischen Wortschatz* (Munich, 1965), p. 75.

²⁵ These are well described by Willard in *Blickling Homilies*, pp. 47–65.

²⁶ *Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Willard, p. 48.

Psalter, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 776, although in that case at least the Latin text would have remained comprehensible. The Old English homilies were rebound, perhaps multiple times, being reassembled with a fifteenth-century Calendar and a fourteenth-century gospel sequentiae made up of the gospel pericopes for Ascension, Epiphany, Annunciation, and Christmas — a suitable range of texts to serve as an oath book.²⁷ This period of use probably explains the disordered state of the Old English portion of the book and some of the losses and soiling to which it was subject before the rebinding of 1960.²⁸ The collection remained in possession of the City of Lincoln from at least 1304 until it was disposed of, along with the Blickling Psalter, in 1724.²⁹

If the Blickling Homilies ended the Middle Ages in Lincoln, and if they are composed in an East Midlands dialect, one reasonable and economical hypothesis is that the collection was first gathered and copied at Lincoln and that the book simply stayed there. Lincoln of the late tenth century would provide a suitable locus for such activity. Just as the scholarly energy devoted to Anglo-Saxon codicology is providing a fuller picture of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, so too the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon towns is providing a more and more detailed sense of occupation and settlement patterns and an increasingly nuanced picture of everyday life in Anglo-Saxon England. Lincoln has seen a great wealth of new Anglo-Saxon finds, many on display at the town's archaeological museum, known as The Collection, and a reinterpretation of its history has been published in the volumes of the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology.³⁰ Thus, although Lincoln (Anglo-Saxon Lindsey) does not make much of an impact in the written record of Anglo-Saxon England, it is becoming possible to understand the development of the city in considerable detail.

The broad outlines are strikingly characteristic of the Danelaw area: a Roman settlement, here in two parts, saw continued occupation throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, with a period of Norse control, and a Norman castle and cathedral

²⁷ As Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 454, suggests, comparing it with the Blickling Psalter and with London, British Library, MSS Royal 9.A.vii and 9.A.xii.

²⁸ As Willard speculates in *Blickling Homilies*, pp. 18–25.

²⁹ As is recorded in the Lincoln Corporation Minute Book; see *Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Willard, pp. 15–17.

³⁰ Of particular relevance are Peter Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, A History of Lincolnshire, 3 (Lincoln, 1998), and Dorothy M. Owen, *Church and Society in Medieval Lincolnshire*, A History of Lincolnshire, 5 (Lincoln, 1971).

soon after the Conquest.³¹ While the political story appears to be one of conquest and change, the archaeological evidence tells a story of continuity, with a prosperous city growing on a grid pattern that is maintained and enhanced by subsequent settlers. Regardless of political turmoil, Lincoln proves to have been a wealthy city, with evidence of an expansion of economic activity in the tenth century, charging tolls, and minting some 10 per cent of surviving English coins in the eleventh century, when Sawyer estimates the population at about 12,000, assuming that the 1270 tenements in a fast-growing town likely included more than one household each.³² There was certainly a flourishing of artisanal talent in the town. A craftsman like Thorfast the comb-maker, making combs in the late tenth century in Flaxengate, whose trade is reconstructed in the city's museum, was literate enough to include runic inscriptions on some of his wares.

Such a large and prosperous city needed ecclesiastical structures to look after all those souls, and Lincoln was particularly rich in churches. It teetered on the edge of being a bishopric as the huge diocese of Dorchester was variously divided up: Lincoln was probably home to a bishop sometime in the seventh and eighth centuries and again from the mid-tenth century until 1011. The status of bishopric resumed under King William I, with the building of the present cathedral begun in 1072. When it did not have cathedral status, the city was presumably home to a powerful minster church. There is also ample record of numerous small churches in the various districts of the city with at least thirty-two churches by the beginning of the twelfth century, most of which date back to late Anglo-Saxon times.³³ This multiplicity of churches needed priests, each of whom needed preaching material for edifying his congregation.

With such extensive ecclesiastical institutions, it is reasonable to assume that the priests gathered into some form of communal life, probably as an unreformed secular-clerical community in the cathedral when there was one or the minster church when there wasn't. This would provide a context for the pooling of the physical resources that would help the preachers, including books of homilies. A cathedral would likely have the scriptorium for writing such a collection as well as the pull to borrow books that could inform the collection. In other words, the cathedral community that was in place at Lincoln between the mid-tenth century

³¹ On the pattern, see, inter alia, R. A. Hall, 'The Five Boroughs of the Danelaw: A Review of Present Knowledge', *ASE*, 18 (1989), 149–206.

³² Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, p. 185.

³³ See Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire*, pp. 150–54, 185, and Steven Bassett, 'Lincoln and the Anglo-Saxon See of Lindsey', *ASE*, 18 (1989), 1–32.

and 1011 had both the opportunity, the material wealth, the skill, and the need to create a manuscript like the Blickling Homilies, and such an origin would be consistent with the language of the collection, and perhaps with its somewhat anomalous codicological details. While not open to conclusive proof, Lincoln has a good claim for a possible place of origin for the Blickling Homilies in or soon after 971.

Uses of the Blickling Homilies

If the date and place of origin of the Blickling Homilies has been the subject of considerable controversy, their use has been even more contested. To some extent, the debate here parallels that for all vernacular homilies. While composition in the vernacular and references to the day's biblical reading or liturgical season suggest a performance context in association with the liturgical celebration attended by all the people on a Sunday or special feast day, that straightforward performance context has not gone unchallenged, above all by Milton Gatch, who considers that most homilies were performed instead at the monastic night office.³⁴ Gatch's restrictive hypothesis has been rebutted most effectively by Mary Clayton, who demonstrated that liturgical performance to the people is, indeed, likely for Anglo-Saxon homilies and is paralleled by a development in Carolingian preaching.³⁵ Much effective recent scholarship has discussed Old English homilies assuming performance to the people on Sundays and feast days.³⁶

Within this broad debate, the performance context of the Blickling Homilies has been particularly confused by Gatch's restatement of his sceptical stance in an influential essay that wears its position in its title, 'The Unknowable Audience of the Blickling Homilies'.³⁷ Gatch sees the urge 'to consider what the Blickling

³⁴ See especially Gatch, 'Eschatology in the Anonymous Old English Homilies', and 'The Office in Late Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', in *Learning and Literature*, ed. by Lapidge and Gneuss, pp. 341–62.

³⁵ Mary Clayton, 'Homiliaries and Preaching in Anglo-Saxon England', *Peritia*, 4 (1985), 207–42, an essay which is foundational for homiletic studies.

³⁶ For good overviews of recent trends in homiletic studies, see Charles D. Wright, 'Old English Homilies and Latin Sources', in *The Old English Homily*, ed. by Kleist, pp. 15–66, and Fulk and Cain, *History of Old English Literature*, pp. 70–86.

³⁷ Milton McC. Gatch, 'The Unknowable Audience of the Blickling Homilies', *ASE*, 18 (1989), 99–115, repr. in Gatch, *Eschatology and Christian Nurture: Themes in Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Religious Life* (Aldershot, 2000). References to this essay are given by page number within the text.

Homilies may have to say about everyday life in Anglo-Saxon England or (more specifically) about the audience for whom this [...] collection was made' (p. 100) as deeply suspect along with the suggestion that the anthology 'had as its clearly intended audience a congregation or congregations of lay folk of all sorts and conditions' (p. 101). He looks for the implied audience in four of the Blickling Homilies, repeatedly seeing mixed signs. In the case of Blickling 4, an adapted translation of a Caesarius sermon on tithing, here serving the Third Sunday in Lent, for example, Gatch points out that 'the address shifts from a presumably general congregation gathered in Lent to receive catechetical instruction on an aspect of the Christian life to an audience of clergy, who are admonished to perform the pastoral office well and faithfully' (p. 104) and concludes that the homily 'must be regarded as containing only confused, and therefore confusing, evidence concerning its audience' (p. 105).

This seems to me a needlessly pessimistic conclusion. In the more fully considered case of Ælfric's homilies, such combined address both to a broad secular audience and to a religious one, variously clerical or monastic, has long been remarked and generally seen to imply a broad and inclusive audience rather than an unknowable one.³⁸ A clerical reader is always a necessary intermediary audience for a vernacular homily, since the priest would have performed the homily to the lay congregation, and so it is not surprising if the priest is at times exhorted to benefit from the content of a homily in addition to the congregation. And multiple audiences may simply reflect that Anglo-Saxon sermons clearly got used more than once — at the most basic level, Blickling 4 occurs in both the Blickling Homilies manuscript and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Junius 85 and 86.³⁹ In a recent series of articles, I have tried to show how Ælfric's homilies would have got performed in multiple contexts to multiple audiences, localizing my analysis by considering the likely performances of the *Catholic Homilies* in different religious contexts within reach of Ælfric's monastery at Cerne Abbas, Dorset, or in one particular collection, along with the less grounded case of how his liturgically unanchored

³⁸ See especially Malcolm R. Godden, 'The Development of Ælfric's Second Series of "Catholic Homilies"', *English Studies*, 54 (1973), 209–16; Godden, 'Experiments in Genre: The Saints' Lives in Ælfric's "Catholic Homilies"', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, 1996), pp. 261–87; and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, ed. by Godden, EETS, s.s., 18 (Oxford, 2000).

³⁹ On the likely uses of which, see my 'The Use of Ælfric's Homilies: MSS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 85 and 86 in the Field', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. by Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden, 2009), pp. 345–68.

saints' lives can also be seen in multiple performance contexts.⁴⁰ Gatch's dismissal of the evidence because it is multiple seems to me unhelpfully reductive, suggesting a desire for a simple and single intended and actualized audience that is surely uncharacteristic of most surviving Anglo-Saxon texts of any kind.

Gatch goes on to make clear his frustration with Blickling 4 at multiple levels: 'however winsome the Blickling sermon may be (comparatively) as an example of moral suasion, examined closely it seems very deeply flawed and confused both conceptually and rhetorically [...]; it is misleading and wrong in its citation of authority, even by the standards of the age' (p. 105). This is a critique which seems to privilege a standard that few Anglo-Saxon texts can attain and in doing so to dismiss both the evidence for performance and the value of the content that the homily can provide. Gatch's analysis of Blickling 5, a unique sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent from an unknown source, adds another layer to his discomfiture: 'Even without knowing its Latin sources in detail, one must conclude that it is so conventional in content that it was probably little adapted to the special conditions and spiritual needs of an Anglo-Saxon congregation of the tenth century' (p. 106). To charge an Anglo-Saxon homily with being too conventional is a little like berating the pope for being too Catholic — the objection is definitional and inevitable more than something to rail at. Yet even the most conventional material will also have an influence on the culture in which it is conveyed, and it is precisely such conventional material that may give us a chance to see the expectations that helped form a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon congregation.

The issue of reproducing convention also haunts Gatch's analysis of Blickling 10, a homily about the end of the world almost certainly intended for Rogation Wednesday. This homily begins with a form of address that is explicit in its expansive secular reach:

Men ða leofostan, hwæt nú anra manna gehwylcne ic myngie 7 lære, ge weras ge wif, ge geonge ge ealde, ge snottre ge unwise, ge þa welegan ge þa þearfan. (Morris 107/9–11, fol. 65^v/5–9)

[Dearly beloved, lo, I now exhort and teach every person, both men and women, both young and old, both wise and unwise, both the rich and the poor.]

⁴⁰ Jonathan Wilcox, 'Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care', in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Francesca Tinti (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 52–62; 'The Use of Ælfric's Homilies'; and 'The Audience of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and the Face of Cotton Caligula A. xiv, fols 93–130', in *Beatus Vir: Studies in Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Phillip Pulsiano*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf (Tempe, 2006), pp. 228–63.

Such a form of address clarifies how the conventional ‘men ða leofostan’ phrase incorporates both sexes as well as a range of age, educational achievement, and income level. This opening goes a long way to constructing a probable audience for the Blickling Homilies. Gatch concludes ‘that little sense of a specific congregation or reading audience prevails in this collection of ancient and commonplace materials for the instruction of Christian folk. [...] We have to accept that the audience for the Blickling sermons is “unknowable”’ (p. 115), but I disagree. It seems to me that this sequence of homilies presents a rich array of imagined audiences — mostly secular, occasionally clerical — that can serve well for a historical or imaginative reconstruction of the performance context of these pieces.

But this is only one range of evidence. Focusing on the audience implied within the text does not make full allowance for the messy range of realities in which these homilies likely were delivered. Gatch begins his conclusion, ‘It is an attractive assumption that books can tell us something about the people for whom they were written’ (p. 114), but goes on to give this assumption no credence. I would like to pursue precisely this attractive assumption. It implies a different methodology — an attentiveness to the material record of the book in order to recover the communication circuit from homilist to scribe to page to performer to audience — which can shed its own further light on the issue of implied and actual users of the book.⁴¹ Some actual users left indelible marks in the book of the Blickling Homilies, and, although ignored by Gatch, that is evidence also worthy of consideration.

There are many methodological difficulties in isolating these user marks. The two original scribes often corrected their work and so the pages of the manuscript are rich in changes that presumably belong to the campaign of first writing rather than the manuscript’s use. Dating those interventions that were made after the original writing is difficult because they often feature small additions made in cramped space, while alterations or erasures are even harder to date. In the case of the Blickling Homilies, the marks of earlier users risk being overwritten by the vigorous later annotations made at Lincoln, or lost in the repeated cropping of the manuscript, or erased in the twentieth-century tidying up of the manuscript for sale.⁴² Despite these challenges, some marks can be identified that were written by users of the homilies subsequent to their first writing and prior to their becoming unreadable because of the change of language. Even if these interventions are often

⁴¹ See further Jonathan Wilcox, ‘Transmission of Literature and Learning: Anglo-Saxon Scribal Culture’, in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Pulsiano and Treharne, pp. 50–70.

⁴² See *Blickling Homilies*, ed. by Willard, pp. 19–20 and 42, on erasures before the sale.

small and sometimes cryptic, they provide previously neglected evidence for real-world users.

Such is the case, for example, with the insertion of *se* before *hælend*, 'Saviour', four times in the opening of Blickling 3, the homily for the First Sunday in Lent (at fols 14^r/10, 14^r/16, 15^v/16, 16^r/16, Morris 27/2, 27/6, 29/19, 29/33).⁴³ Both the colour of the ink and the letter forms look somewhat different in the case of each insertion, with a particularly marked difference in the two instances on fol. 14^r, suggesting that these insertions may be the work of more than one corrector or, at the least, of more than one campaign of improvement. Such insertions do not meaningfully change the sense of the homily, of course, but rather indicate a distinct linguistic and rhythmical preference by one or more subsequent users. The preference is only a tendency, since the form is handled inconsistently throughout the homily, both before and after the improvement. *Hælend* is used eight times in this homily. In one case, the demonstrative was used from the start ('*se hælend*' at fol. 15^v/8, Morris 29/13); in four cases the demonstrative was added, perhaps by multiple scribes; and in a further three cases the form without the demonstrative is allowed to stand (at fols 14^v/5, 14^v/12, and 17^v/20, Morris 27/12, 27/17, and 33/3).⁴⁴ The four insertions, then, are evidence of a linguistic preference that one or more readers of this particular homily felt strongly enough to mark up, if inconsistently.⁴⁵ If nothing else, these insertions show that one or more readers chose to work over this homily with care with quill in hand, making a change that was surely most useful to somebody who was going to deliver the homily orally and wanted to be comfortable with the rhythm of the language that he would speak in performance.

Other insertions in homily 3 may have a similar motivation. The insertion of a second *e* to fill out the second syllable of the compound 'efen-éce' at fol. 15^r/14, Morris 29/3, appears to have been made by an annotating hand rather than by the

⁴³ Morris correctly records three of these cases but mistakenly marks 29/19 as partly lost through cropping (which it is not) rather than having an inserted *se*. Kelly, *Blickling Homilies*, duly italicizes all four cases as inserted, lines 1, 4, 40, 51, and then continues the trend by himself adding *Se* (properly marked in square brackets) to two more cases that the annotator omitted, his lines 10 and 14 (fol. 14^r/5 and 12).

⁴⁴ It may be significant in the last case that a preceding *bet* introducing a clause could have been mistaken for the rhythm of a demonstrative.

⁴⁵ The same change proves to be common in some manuscripts of Ælfric homilies; see Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS, s.s., 17 (Oxford, 1997), p. 127, n. 12.

original scribe. Likewise, the insertion of a missing 'us' at fol. 18^r/5, Morris 33/6, and of 'gedon' at fol. 20^r/14, Morris 35/36, do not appear to be in the main scribe's hand. The correction of small omissions like these would not be particularly useful for someone who was engaging with the manuscript as a reading text, but could be very useful for someone preparing to read aloud from it. Even more clearly, the alteration of 'þe' to 'þy' at fol. 19^r/6, Morris 33/34 makes most sense for someone concerned to speak the text aright. The sense here is instrumental, with this usage paralleling *þy* in the text a line earlier (fol. 19^r/5, Morris 33/33). The spelling variant 'þe' to 'þy' was unlikely to confuse an Anglo-Saxon reader, simply providing an alternative spelling of the instrumental of the demonstrative, and yet might well affect pronunciation of the word. An orator concerned to make the best oral effect of the passage is the person most likely to make this change. The other small revisions and corrections mostly affect rhythm and speaking comfort more than sense and comprehension and are best interpreted as the marks of one or more priest improving the script before reading it out to a congregation. While untold and unknowable other performances of the homily are likely, we can see that some quill-wielding improvers left their marks in preparation for delivering this particular homily.

Other annotations signal attention to content but may be the work of readers engaging with the texts in a readerly manner rather than preparing them for reciting aloud. The dating formula in Blickling Homily 11, for example, attracted the attention of at least one medieval user. Near the account of the ages of the world, the comment 'fif elddo sindon ahgan. on þam syxtan sceal beon dom[.] | deið' is written in the upper margin of fol. 72^r.⁴⁶ This enters into dialogue with the text at this point, which describes how the Day of Judgement is not far off, 'forþon þe ealle þa tacno & þa forebeacno þa þe her ure Drihten ær toward sægde, þæt ær domes dæge geweorþan sceoldan, ealle þa syndon || <+> agangen, buton þam anum þæt se awer <i>gda cuma Antecrist nugét hider on middangeard <ne> com',⁴⁷ with the note connected to the sentence through an inserted cross at the place marked. The note heightens attention to this passage. Probably the same annotator entered 'on þam sixta[.] | elddo' (in the sixth age) at fol. 72^r/8 margin, an insertion into the sequence: 'Þonne sceal þes middangeard endian | ȝ þisse is þonne se mæste dæl

⁴⁶ 'Five ages are gone; on the sixth shall be the Day of Judgment.'

⁴⁷ Fols 71^v/18–72^r/3, Morris 117/30–33, 'because all the signs and tokens which our Lord described before, that should occur here before the Day of Judgment, all those have come to <+> pass, except that one alone, that the accursed visitor Antichrist has not yet come hither into the world'.

agangen, efne nigon hund wintra 7 lxxi. on þys <se> geare',⁴⁸ with the added phrase at the line break. Supplying explicit reference to the sixth age emphasizes the count down through the ages and draws attention to the present, and last, age, which is also emphasized by the dating formula. The transitional spellings *deih* and *elddo* suggest that the annotator was writing as language conventions were changing.⁴⁹ At this time, some reader of the homily drew attention to this passage, perhaps captivated by the rhetoric of the approaching end, perhaps caught up by the message, perhaps pointing to the dating formula.

Another cluster of changes may reflect contemplative library-like reading of the texts or preparation for performance, namely the addition of rubrics to Blickling Homilies 11–14. Such rubrics make the homilies easier to find and easier to use. The rubrics appear to date from the late eleventh century since they include transitional spellings such as 'dei' (homily 11, fol. 70^v/2) and are written in a script that Ker characterizes as 'a rough hand of s. xi'.⁵⁰ These rubrics got repeated attention. 'Sancta maria mater. DOMINI' of homily 13 at fol. 84^v/7 has received a subsequent pious addition, 'Nostri Iesu CRisti'. The erasure of two rubrics, for homilies 9 and 10, is impossible to date but also demonstrates attentiveness to the naming of the following pieces, if less helpful in their outcome than the additions. Rubrics are most useful for a kind of indexical reading, enabling the finding of a homily and making clear the appropriate time of its delivery. Such issues of access were seen as worthy of revision. At the least, this suggests continued attention to the homilies and their purpose more than a century after the manuscript's creation, while the other annotations show that such attention was bestowed both by scholarly readers accessing their content and by those who would be reading out these homilies.

Reading the Blickling Homilies

Building on the suggestions in this essay, it would be reasonable to hypothesize performance of the Blickling Homilies in Lincoln, beginning from 971 or soon thereafter and continuing throughout the eleventh century and into the twelfth century. The book may have been written in the scriptorium of the cathedral at

⁴⁸ Folio 72^r/8–11, Morris 117/36–119/2, 'Then this world must end and the greatest portion of this is now gone, even 971 years in this year.'

⁴⁹ The doubling of consonants might signal the preceding short vowel as short, in the manner of the *Ormulum*, a transitional text produced close to Lincoln at the Arroaisian Abbey at Bourne in the last quarter of the twelfth century. I thank Nick Doane for this suggestion.

⁵⁰ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 453.

Lincoln, and may have stayed in the cathedral church, providing the homily on the occasion of notable church services for the relatively high-status services of the cathedral, attended, presumably, by men and women, both young and old, wise and unwise, rich and poor, to summarize the address of Blickling Homily 10. In addition, the same book could have served priests who preached in the many small neighbourhood churches to a far smaller congregation.⁵¹ The message of these homilies would have been suitable in both settings. Blickling Homily 3, for example, the text that has received the added demonstratives before the noun *halend* 'Saviour', tells of the need for fasting and abstinence and almsgiving. That message might be particularly relevant to the burghers of a prosperous town like Lincoln, and repeated warnings about the dangers of wealth are characteristic of this collection.⁵² The enduring power of Anglo-Saxon homiletic collections lies precisely in their generality and therefore the timelessness of the advice: fasting and abstinence and almsgiving are always in fashion in a Christian society. The very generality of the moral message kept it relevant as long as the language of the homilies was comprehensible, albeit to the frustration of modern attempts to localize and date the collection based on its contents.

This paradox is true even of the Ascension Day homily, Blickling 11, which includes the tantalizingly precise dating formula of 971. After warning of the impending but unknowable end, the homilist describes the city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives in considerable detail and concludes:

Ond nu, men þa leofestan, þeah þe we nu þær andwearde ne syn æt þære halgan stowe þe ic nu sægde, þe hwepre we magon on þyssum stowum, þe we nu on syndon, gode 7 medeme weorþan for urum Drihtne, gif we nu soþ 7 riht on urum life dón willað; for þon æghwylc man, sy þær eorðan þær he sy, þurh góde dæda Gode lician sceal, 7 ælc man sceal his góðan dæda ahebban, gif he sceal gód 7 medeme weorþan. Ac uton teolian þæt us þás tida idle ne gewitan, þe he ure Drihten us to bóte 7 to clænsunga urra dæda forgifen hafað. Uton beon ælmesgeorne 7 árdæde wið earme men, 7 eaþmode us betweenan, 7 Godes ege 7 his lufe fæstlice on urum heortum 7 on ure þara nehstena healdan. 7 teolian we þonne þeos halige tíð eft cume embe twelf monað, þe se lifge þæt he betre sy þonne he nu is, þurh Godes fultum, þe lyfað 7 rixað a butan ende. (Morris, pp. 129/30–131/6, Blickling 11, fol. 80^{r-v})

⁵¹ The village church at Raunds, Northamptonshire, was perhaps characteristic of small churches of this period, and archaeological evidence allows the inference that 'up to twenty people, standing and rather crowded', could hear a service in it; see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 391.

⁵² See particularly Blickling Homilies 4, 5, and 10; on this issue more generally, see also Malcolm Godden, 'Money, Power and Morality in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE*, 19 (1990), 41–65.

[And now, dearest people, although we are not now present at the holy place that I just now told of, nevertheless we may in these places which we are now in, become good and proper before our Lord, if we will now perform what is true and right in our life; because every person, whatever part of the earth he may be in, must please God through good deeds, and each person must raise up his good deeds, if he shall be good and proper. But let us now strive so that this season, which our Lord has given us for repentance and for the cleansing of our deeds, does not pass from us in vain. Let us be charitable and merciful to poor people, and humble among ourselves, and keep firmly in our hearts the fear and love of God and of our neighbours. And let us strive, when this holy season may come again after twelve months, that he who is alive may be better than he is now, through the help of God, who lives and reigns forever without end.]

Even with its tantalizing earlier references to a specific year (971) and a specific place (Jerusalem), the end of this homily neatly exemplifies the universalizing Christian moves that make the work both so universally effective and so hard to localize. Christian time operates in terms of the liturgical round, with a celebration here that both looks backward to the historical time of the Gospels and anticipates the annual return of the liturgical cycle. Through the simple device of repetition, this homily is insistent on the need for action *nu*, ‘now’, which chimes five times through the first sentence here. *Nu* in this passage is *þeos halige tid* which contrasts with the time of the events of the Christian story in Jerusalem, the recurring season of the liturgical year, when repentance is particularly appropriate, and also simply *now*, the recurring present of the performative moment. Placed against these temporal frames is human time, *on urum life*, ‘in our life’, with an emphasis on human mortality, since only that individual will be around next year, *þe se lifge*, ‘that one who is alive’, in contrast with the closing doxology celebrating God’s eternal time. In the turning of human time, the individual has the obligation for development, *þæt he betre sy þonne he nu is*, ‘that he may be better than he is now’. Being better means doing *sop 7 riht*, ‘the true and the right’, the non-specific but recurring homiletic remit, chiming in this passage with the repeated *gode 7 medeme weorþan*, ‘become good and proper’, clarified here as involving charity and mercy and love of God and neighbour, which reasonably summarizes the thrust of the rest of the homily. This is all activity that can happen in any place, including *on þyssum stowum*, *þe we nu on syndon*, ‘in these places which we now are in’. The development implied is always appropriate to the here and the now and so precisely this same call will apply to the individual addressed next year, *þe se lifge*, and on through repeated performances. The brilliance of these homilies, contrary to Gatch’s assessment, is the way such straightforward moralizing is timeless and placeless and therefore infinitely reusable.

Close attention to manuscript evidence can reveal a lot about the circulation of even such a timeless text. There is a paradox when we study homilies through the written record, since these are works that were imaginatively conceived and were probably most often heard orally through the verbal delivery of a priest in the context of performing a service, and yet the material manuscript is all that remains of those oral performances.⁵³ Nevertheless, that written record can provide a rich source for understanding embodied performances that are now lost. In a real economy of effort, any priest operating in Lincoln — or anywhere else that English was spoken and understood — could have picked up this book and fruitfully performed its wisdom. That beauty of reusability makes it hard to pinpoint when and where this went on, but the demonstrative-adder, the annotators, and the soiled pages demonstrate that these works were used for an extended period of time after their creation in 971. The subsequent annotations help establish Lincoln as a fruitful locus for imagining all this activity, where a performance of the Blickling Homilies at any time could help create a reformed Christian subject in this place and now.

⁵³ The paradox is explored sensitively for non-homiletic texts by the honoree of this volume; see *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, 1991), and A. N. Doane, 'The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer', *Oral Tradition*, 9 (1994), 420–39.

FOUR CONTIGUOUS POEMS IN THE EXETER BOOK: A COMBINED READING OF *HOMILETIC FRAGMENT III*, *SOUL AND BODY II*, *DEOR*, AND *WULF AND EADWACER*

Patrick W. Conner

In reviewing a collection of essays titled *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, David Townsend writes that the collection ‘underlines the anachronistic artificiality of a stark division between literary and technical attention to the codices that medieval readers viewed more as concrete tactile realities, and less as bearers of transcendent texts, than do we who stand at the end of the age of print’.¹ This observation is no less true of early medieval codices than of the late medieval manuscripts that comprise the subject of that essay collection. I shall here turn to an early medieval codex — Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501, also known as the Exeter Book — to examine the proposition that four poems preceding Riddles 1–59 in Booklet III of that manuscript beg, by their sequencing as well as their thematic content, to be read together in a performance context, one that was perhaps appropriate to a banquet with both men and women in attendance, such as those we know were held by the parish guilds of southern England during the Anglo-Saxon period.²

¹ David Townsend, review of *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. by A. J. Minnis, in *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 42 (1991), 561–62.

² Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 1993); Conner, ‘Parish Guilds and the Production of Old English Literature in the Public Sphere’, in *(Inter)Texts: Studies in Early Insular Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. by Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck (Tempe, 2008), pp. 257–73; Conner, ‘The Old English Elegy: An Historicization’, in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and David F. Johnson (Oxford, 2004), pp. 15–45.

The Limits of the Texts

The Old English poetic corpus is remarkable for the sliding boundaries separating numerous texts. In some cases, divisions are ill-defined because we have lost a leaf from the manuscript, so it is difficult sometimes to know whether we have lost a middle portion of the poem or whether an end to one and/or a beginning to another is gone. The poem that Krapp and Dobbie call *Resignation* and that Muir edits under the name *Contrition* provides an obvious example, but so does *The Partridge* (or, as I prefer to think of it, the beginning of *The Partridge* and the end of *Homiletic Fragment III*), as we shall see.³ Similarly, *Soul and Body I* in the Vercelli Book ends tail-less or *acaudata*, and the following poem, *Homiletic Fragment I*, is *acephalous*, or without a beginning. Maybe they are two poems, but perhaps they are not. Also, in the Vercelli Book, *Elene* has 1321 metrical lines, ending with the word 'Amen'. However, at line 1235, the word *finit* is written, after which there follows a new verse paragraph devoted to Cynewulf's runic signature. Would it be fair to say that we don't know the name of the poet who wrote *Elene*, but only the name of the poet who wrote a homiletic piece following it?⁴ We have to thank Fred Robinson for counselling a reconciliation of *An Exhortation to Christian Living* and *A Summons to Prayer* after their divorce in the earlier critical literature, but we need to remember that some couples, and some poems, just don't belong together no matter how well they seem to get along.⁵ The point has been vigorously argued both for and against a necessary relationship between *The Wife's Lament* and *The Husband's Message*.⁶

³ All citations from the text of the Exeter Book are to *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. by Bernard J. Muir, 2 vols (Exeter, 1994), with reference to *The [digital] Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Muir and compiled by Nick Kennedy (Exeter, 2006); cf. *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR, 3 (New York, 1936). All translations from Old English or Latin are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ *The Vercelli Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp, ASPR, 2 (New York, 1932).

⁵ Fred C. Robinson, "The Rewards of Piety": Two Old English Poems in their Manuscript Context', in *Hermeneutics and Medieval Culture*, ed. by Patrick J. Gallacher and Helen Damico (Albany, 1989), pp. 193–200.

⁶ See, for example, M. J. Swanton, 'The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration', *Anglia*, 82 (1964), 269–90; W. F. Bolton, 'The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message: A Reconsideration Revisited', *Archiv*, 205 (1969), 337–51; D. R. Howlett, 'The Wife's Lament and The Husband's Message', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 79 (1978), 7–10.

Nor is this by any means a complete list of all such quandaries we might cite. The corpus of Old English literature is rife with agglutinated compositions — poems where the graphic signifiers of divisions, if they ever existed, would have been on leaves that are now missing or (as with *Elene*) where we have a partial indication of a division that we choose to ignore. But there are also compound poems that include self-contained units within clearly marked larger boundaries. With the three parts of *Christ* and the two parts of *Guthlac*, it is easy enough to see these divisions in the manuscript, although there is a body of critical literature discussing the integration of the so-called preface or prologue to *Guthlac A*.⁷ But there are compositions within larger units that would seem to stand on their own quite well. The portion of *Beowulf* known as ‘The Lay of the Last Survivor’ (lines 2247–66), the first-person elegiac account of abandoning the treasure of a destroyed people to the earth, serves as an example. Others have thought of these lines as elegiac, and I view them, along with ‘The Old Man’s Lament’ in *Beowulf*, as the only Old English elegies *not* contained in the Exeter Book.⁸ Other examples of materials that might stand on their own include the individual lyrics of *Christ I* (and they were so edited by Robert Burlin),⁹ the Leaping Christ in *Christ II* (to whom someone gave an extra leap from what he was allowed in Gregory’s source homily),¹⁰ the part of *The Seafarer* that Ezra Pound chose to translate, the Bestiary narratives — *The Phoenix*, *The Panther*, and *The Whale* — if shorn of the lines that recount their allegorical applications, and other poetic sub-units to be

⁷ R. W. Chambers, ‘Modern Study of the Poetry of the Exeter Book’, in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, facsimile edn by R. W. Chambers and others (London, 1933), pp. 33–43 (pp. 38–39), lists all previous editors’ dispositions of the prologue. Both major editions of the poem published since the appearance of the facsimile (*The Exeter Book*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 49–50; Jane Roberts, *The Guthlac Poems of the Exeter Book* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 83–84) treat the lines in question as part of *Guthlac A*, but Roberts, ‘Guthlac A: Sources and Source Hunting’, in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. by Edward Donald Kennedy and others (Wolfeboro, 1988), pp. 1–18, also notes that ‘the legacy of [...] [attempts to establish other boundaries for the poem] has not entirely vanished’ (p. 3). The history of unifying ‘Guthlac A’ is documented by Roy M. Liuzzza, ‘The Old English Christ and Guthlac Texts, Manuscripts, and Critics’, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 41 (1990), 1–11 (pp. 1–3).

⁸ For an insightful example of ‘The Old Man’s Lament’ in *Beowulf* being used to model the nature of Germanic elegy, see Joseph Harris, ‘A Nativist Approach to *Beowulf*: The Case of Germanic Elegy’, in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 45–62 (pp. 48–55).

⁹ Burlin, *The Old English Advent: A Typological Commentary* (New Haven, 1968).

¹⁰ Andrew Breeze, ‘The “Leaps” that Christ Made’, *Ériu*, 40 (1989), 190–93.

encountered in Old English poetry, although in many of those cases there is general agreement that the marriage should be kept intact. In his important study *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation*, Robert Jordan spoke of medieval aesthetics in terms of 'inorganic structure', by which he meant discrete, juxtaposed units.¹¹ Certainly the bare building blocks of Old English poetry suggest the presence of a similar aesthetic in the early medieval period, too.

This sort of agglutinative and compounding tendency is in fact a strength in the corpus, because it allows us to read these poems in shifting contexts, making them much richer for the critic, perhaps, than more uncomplicated structures are likely to be. What is rich fare for critics can be a nightmare for editors, of course, as well as for uninitiated readers, for both of those groups have to be able to set the boundaries of a poem in order to work with it. It is possible, however, as others working with Anglo-Saxon cultural materials have suggested, that the manuscripts of this period offer evidence for a much more complex and varied notion of the cultural work of Old English poetry than we have heretofore been willing to grant.¹²

The Contexts of the Texts

I have recently become interested in the Anglo-Saxon parish guilds, whose statutes all required that at least one banquet be held per year. The guild feast not only provided a documentable context with the potential of many kinds of literary performance other than preaching, but it practically necessitated such performances, insofar as we can tell from a very fragmented surviving commentary on it. We have, unfortunately, no clear documentation that speaks of entertainments in the context of guild feasts in England during the Anglo-Saxon period. The one suggestion that a performing class might have been employed on such occasions occurs in Aelred of Rievaulx's twelfth-century *Genealogia regnum Anglorum*, in a note that Matthew Parker, in his *De antiquitate Britanniae* (1572), designated 'Oratio Edgari Regis pro monachatu propagando' (King Edgar's prayer for increasing the monks). The note is attributed to the year 969, but it is not attested in pre-Conquest sources and may have originated with Aelred:

¹¹ Robert M. Jordan, *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic Structure* (Cambridge, MA, 1967).

¹² See e.g. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 4 (Cambridge, 1990), and Thomas Bredehoft, *Early English Metre* (Toronto, 2005).

Dicam quod boni lugent, mali rident: dicam dolens (sit amen dici potest) quomodo diffluent in commensationibus, in ebrietatibus, in cubilibus, et impudiciis;¹³ ut jam domus clericorum putentur prostibula meretricum, conciliabulum histrionum.¹⁴

If some contemporary practice should lie behind King Edgar's purported representation of cleric-plays, then Jehan Bodel's *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, a localized miracle play probably written in Arras, or at least somewhere in Picardy, c. 1200, may provide an indication of what some of these presentations were like.¹⁵ Indeed, Arras long played an important role in the development of Anglo-Saxon religious life.¹⁶ *Le Jeu de Saint Nicolas* concerns an icon of the saint that is captured by the king of Africa's Saracens, but that nevertheless looks after its captor's treasure so efficiently that the Saracen king is converted. Records show that several charitable guilds were dedicated to St Nicholas, and one, the 'Confrérie des clerics de Saint-Nicolas', met like most guilds for Mass on their saint's day and then attended a feast at which his *vita* was read. Bodel's play appears to have been written for such a feast. It both displays 'vicious pleasures' (to use Richard Axton's phrase) and moralizes against them, satirizing people given over to such vices.¹⁷ Somewhat similarly, Hrotswitha of Gandersheim

¹³ For the phrase 'in commensationibus [...] et impudiciis', see Romans 13. 13.

¹⁴ 'I say that good persons mourn and the evil mock: I say sadly ("amen" may be added) how they are wasted away in acts of wantonness, in drunkenness, in fornication and lewdness; so that now the houses of our clerks stink of the posturing of prostitutes, the assemblies of actors.' An accessible edition of the text may be found in *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae a synodo Verolamiensi AD CCCCXLVI ad Londinensem AD MDCCXVII*, ed. by David Wilkins, 4 vols (London, 1737), I, 246. E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1903), I, 32, 5n., cites the same material in his description of surviving evidence for dramatic performance in an Anglo-Saxon context.

¹⁵ For an edition of the play, see Albert Henry, *Le Jeu de Saint Nicolas de Jehan Bodel* (Brussels, 1962); also see Henry, pp. 9–15, for the idea that the play's prologue, on which its narrow localization depends, may be a later addition by another writer.

¹⁶ The Leofric Missal is one verification of the impact of Arras on England with a clear Exeter provenance; the core of the manuscript, identified as 'A', was understood by its first editor, F. E. Warren (Oxford, 1883) to have been imported from Arras-Cambrai; its latest editor, Nicholas Orchard (*The Leofric Missal*, 2 vols (London, 2002) I, 28–29, 131), argues convincingly that 'A' was copied at Canterbury from a manuscript deriving from central or northern Italy and was filled out with the help of a ninth-century sacramentary from Arras. For the authoritative catalogue of the circulation of manuscripts between Anglo-Saxon England and Arras, see Richard Gameson, 'L'Angleterre et la Flandre aux X^e et XI^e siècles: le témoignage des manuscrits', in *Les Échanges culturels au Moyen Âge, XXXIIe Congrès de la SHMES (Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, juin 2001)*, ed. by Société des Historiens Médiévistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur Public, Série Histoire Ancienne et Médiévale, 70 (Paris, 2002), pp. 165–206.

¹⁷ Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1974), pp. 131–37.

(c. 935–1001), a contemporary of Exeter's guild tradition (which flourished c. 960), composed six religiously themed *comediae* in praise of chastity, one of which, her play *Paphnutius*, made mention of the life of the courtesan Thäis (who eventually repented and was accepted by God).¹⁸ Hrotswitha's dialogue was designed to be spoken, not to be sung; hers is not liturgical drama.¹⁹ While it is highly improbable that she wrote for parish guilds, it is not unlikely that high-status members of a confraternity would have been present at readings of some of her plays. It is not idle conjecture to suggest that the structures of abbatial and episcopal entertainments provided likely models for the best of the parish guild banquets.

If we want to read some Old English poetry in the context of banquet entertainments of the sort being examined here, it will be necessary to look at a template for a guild feast before the thirteenth century.²⁰ A necessary proviso must be made, however. Documentary evidence is very much lacking for the design and preparation of a guild feast — or any other feast — at this time because such documents would have served little purpose except possibly to idealize the banquets for those who were able to read. Certainly, this readership would not have included those who undertook the preparations for the feast;²¹ moreover, there would have been no need to create an elaborate description of a parish-guild event, for those concerned were either present on such occasions or were familiar with the proceedings. It is difficult to know for certain, for example, what happened at the installation of Leofric as Bishop of Exeter in 1050, even though we have a fairly detailed description of that event at fol. 3 of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 579 (the Leofric Missal). Since we are much less likely to have primary documents describing guild-feasts, we are restricted in our research to a reasonable reconstruction of them.

Such reconstruction as we can make at this point indicates that servers would first distribute water and towels to the guild members for washing their hands, and afterwards, salt would have been distributed on bits of bread, for this would have

¹⁸ For editions, see *Hrotswithae Opera*, ed. by H. Homeyer (Paderborn, 1970), pp. 321–49.

¹⁹ Axton, *European Drama*, p. 27.

²⁰ The general outline here of the banquet and its courses is based on Constance B. Hieatt, 'Medieval Banquets', in *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. by Solomon H. Katz and William Woys Weaver, 3 vols (New York, 2003), II, 477–80; references to foods are made more specific to the early Middle Ages in accordance with work by Colin Spencer, 'The British Isles', in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. by Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2000), II, 1217–26 (p. 1219).

²¹ See Eva Barlösius, 'France', in *Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. by Kiple and Ornelas, II, 1210–16 (p. 1211).

been a common courtesy at any formal meal. Trenchers were provided to hold the food that was carved and served individually. In the High Middle Ages these were made of stale bread, although they may have been wooden in earlier periods. Then beer, ale, or mead was poured. (All three may have been poured, with the high table getting the more prized drink, mead.) A document in the Public Record Office indicates that a fourteenth-century Lincoln guild dedicated to celebration of the Assumption broke open three barrels of ale in the course of its drinking. With the opening of the first barrel, the guild's statutes were read; with the opening of the second, intercession was offered for the dead; with the opening of the third, the Virgin's blessing was besought on behalf of the living members of the guild.²²

These banquets were at the very heart of communal solidarity. What Jürgen Habermas has argued created a 'public sphere' in the coffee houses and salons of seventeenth-century London and Paris, respectively, was also true in the parish guild banquets of tenth-century Exeter. If these did not lead to the creation of a public sphere which gestures towards visions of nationalism (such as Benedict Anderson was to see in the arrival of the printing press), they did solidify several free social classes in the town, perhaps extending into its outlying areas as well.²³ While the guilds provided help in temporal and spiritual emergencies, such as conflagration or the need to undertake a pilgrimage, and while they offered a reasonable structure in which one could pursue a civic career, the banquets doubtlessly helped to establish a sense of communal solidarity among members of the group, while at the same time confirming their power relations.²⁴ A paradigmatic example of this sort of relationship may be seen in the present-day Feast of St Mark at Tresnuraghes, Sardinia, in which wealthy shepherds provide mutton and villagers seeking or repaying God's assistance provide bread. Not only is the community brought together and food is made available to the poor, but the prestige and concomitant power of those able to provision the feast are also put on display.²⁵

²² Gervase Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies*, 33 (1994), 430–46 (p. 435), citing London, Public Record Office, C47/40/140(b).

²³ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied, 1962), trans. by Thomas Burger as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edn (New York, 2006).

²⁴ Carole Counihan, 'The Social and Cultural Uses of Food', in *Cambridge World History of Food*, ed. by Kiple and Ornelas, II, 1513–23 (pp. 1514–16).

²⁵ See Carole Counihan, 'Bread as World: Food Habits and Social Relations in Modernizing Sardinia', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 57 (1984), 47–59; the work is summarized in Counihan, 'Social and Cultural Uses of Food', p. 1515.

The guild statutes from both Exeter and Abbotsbury indicate that one of the major benefits of belonging to the respective guilds involved prayers from the membership on behalf of both the quick and dead; moreover, the statutes were clearly designed for reading publicly, and the guilds of the later Middle Ages undertook this reading at every banquet, once guild members had collectively decided that reading the statutes was a better way of announcing the contracts they implied than speaking memorized versions of them.²⁶ What we cannot know is whether earlier guilds, unlike the guild at Lincoln, correlated these religious duties with excessive drinking or other activities, which religious critics of Continental guilds found potentially objectionable.²⁷ It is certainly probable that drinking was paired with pledging one's membership in the guild: we know that both Abbotsbury and Exeter had beer or ale at their feasts because it is provided for in the statutes. If we knew how many people were likely to have been in attendance at any one banquet, we could guess whether multiple barrels might have been required. In any case, the Lincoln guild's tradition is unambiguous about when the statutes are to be read: the reading came first, and it may have taken place while the ale was being poured. Presumably, the cup would have been lifted to one's lips at the finish of the reading in signification of renewing one's agreement with the statutes, and drinking *ad lib.* would have ensued thereafter once the meal had been blessed and grace had been said.

Once the ale was poured, four courses were commonly served, a practice dating back to the Roman period. The more formal or ceremonial the meal, the clearer would have been the boundaries between its courses. A horn fanfare is likely to have announced the beginning of the first course, as well as each subsequent course,

²⁶ This development is the subject of Michael Clanchy's notable study *From Memory to Written Record* (London, 1979; 2nd edn, 1993), although the transition from the proclamation of memorized guild statutes to written ones is not examined there. A comparison of the earliest of the surviving written statutes, those preserved from Exeter, with the latest, those from Abbotsbury, shows a growing rhetorical stiffness of expression that is often associated with written declamatory style.

²⁷ See Hincmar, *Capitula Synodica*, Patrologia cursus completus, series latina, 125, cols 777B–778B, wherein he orders his followers expressly to disallow initiation of early Continental guilds which do not pertain to the authority and purposes of his administration: 'Ut de collectis, quas geldonias vel confratrias vulgo vocant, sicut jam verbis monuimus, et nunc scriptis expresse praecipimus, tantum fiat, quantum ad auctoritatem et utilitatem atque rationem pertinet: ultra autem nemo neque sacerdos, neque fidelis quisquam, in parochia nostra progredi audeat' (As far as societies are concerned, which people commonly call 'guilds' or 'confraternities': just as we admonished in words, and now we give notice expressly in writing: let it come to pass as much as it is conducive to authority and usefulness or reason; beyond that no one, neither priest nor any lay person, should dare to go into our parishes). I am indebted to Paul E. Szarmach for help in translating this passage.

although alternatively a bell could have been used, especially if the banquet was being served in the minster, as may have been the case for Exeter's guild.²⁸

At least the records we can assemble on the matter all point in this direction. Gervase Rosser describes a celebratory poem, composed in honour of the Guild of the Holy Cross at Abingdon, that survives in the guild almshouse, noting that it was most likely intended for presentation at the feast.²⁹ Much later on, there were religious guilds dedicated to presenting religious dramas,³⁰ and they had to find poets and playwrights to provide their material. Documentary evidence for there having been dramatic productions of any kind in Anglo-Saxon England is slight, however,³¹ and there is no compelling evidence for dramatic productions under the auspices of the guilds. The closest we come, I think, is in Wulfstan's *Canons of Edgar*, in which we find a proscription against priests either singing or performing music for other than religious purposes: 'And riht is þæt ænig preost ne beo

²⁸ Nicholas Orme, 'The Kalendar Brethren of the City of Exeter', *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 109 (1977), 153–69. Orme's work on the local kalendar guild suggests that use of the minster for meetings was given to the guild and may depend upon an earlier tradition of its meeting there.

²⁹ Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast', p. 445. The poem is surely the same one titled 'Richard Forman's Ancient Monument' in Francis Little, *A Monument of Christian Munificence; or An Account of the Brother Hood of the Holy Cross, and of the Hospital of Christ in Abingdon*, ed. by Claude Delaval Cobham (London, 1871), pp. 12, 121–24. The poem was described in 1871 as 'framed and preserved in the hall of Christ's Hospital'. Little's 1627 manuscript recorded the poem as dating from 1458 (p. 12); it consists of a ten-line Latin preface to a one hundred-line English alliterative poem with alternate rhyming lines and closing with a riddle on the poet's name.

³⁰ See Alexandra F. Johnson, 'The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York: The Creed Play and the Paternoster Play', *Speculum*, 50 (1975), 70–75.

³¹ Nevertheless, a possible ninth-century text of a Harrowing of Hell play is described by David N. Dumville, 'Liturgical Drama and Panegyric Responsory from the Eighth Century? A Re-examination of the Origin and Contents of the Ninth-Century Section of the Book of Cerne', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 23 (1972), 374–406. Michelle P. Brown offers a non-dramatic focus on the same text in *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage, and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London, 1996), p. 146. For a commentary on the speech boundaries of 'Lyric VII', the 'passus', in 'Christ I' wherein Joseph and Mary might be seen as dramatically engaged, see *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, 386–87. M. Bradford Bedingfield, *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 149, argues that 'we can say that the Anglo-Saxon church from an early stage was intimate with the idea of dramatic identification which was the impetus for and heart of the liturgical drama throughout the Middle Ages'. I would argue that the degree to which such dramatic presentation may be considered *extra missae* is directly related to the likelihood that such a text could have found a place in guild performance. Also see Conner, 'The Liturgy and the Old English *Descent into Hell*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 79 (1980), 179–91.

ealusceop, ne on ænige wisan gliwige mid him sylfum oðrum mannum, ac beo swa his hade gebyrað, wis and weorðfull.³² While some Anglo-Saxon manuscripts include works that would have served well in guild feasts as we can best reconstruct them, we cannot say whether they were composed for that purpose, although I have shown elsewhere how Anglo-Saxon guilds and Old English poetry can be seen to reinforce in each other an economy and politics that favoured monastic interests within a public sphere.³³

The Performance of the Texts

The problem of what might have been performed at an Anglo-Saxon parish guild banquet is adumbrated by debate concerning whether or not Old English poetry in general was performed aloud. In fact, we do not know when poetry may have been sung aloud, rather than being read silently; nor do we know when it was accompanied by the harp (if that was the favoured instrument of accompaniment), and when the accompaniment would have been eschewed. On the basis of comparative study of living traditions in Africa, Jeff Opland concluded that performance conditions were different for genres associated with work and ceremony, as opposed to genres that fulfilled a less immediate cultural need, such as epic and hagiography.³⁴ While I can imagine certain poems of the Exeter Book being performed aloud in the context of guild entertainments, the manuscript itself does not yield to my eye any indication about whether these poems were meant to be performed with instrumental accompaniment or through the voice alone. In Exeter from 1327 to 1642–43, there is a long recorded tradition of waits, with their horns, being hired for civic events and other ceremonial purposes, but there is at most the bare possibility that banquet planners of the tenth and eleventh

³² ‘And it is right that no priest be an ale-poet, nor perform alone or among other people, but be wise and honourable as it is appropriate to his station’; see *Wulfstan’s Canons of Edgar*, ed. by Roger Fowler, EETS, o.s., 266 (London, 1972), pp. 14–15 (no. 59). In Ælfric’s second Old English letter to Archbishop Wulfstan, we find ‘Ne ge gligmenn ne beon’ (You are not to be minstrels), although this is not mentioned in the earlier Latin version of the letter; see *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics in altenglischer und latteinischer Fassung*, ed. by Bernard Fehr, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, 9 (Hamburg, 1914), p. 216, no. 188.

³³ Conner, ‘Parish Guilds’, p. 271.

³⁴ Jeff Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, 1980), pp. 256–59. The larger issues are discussed by John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Songs, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 204–12.

centuries might have hired what we now call 'back-up'.³⁵ Since viols were used at banquets after the fifteenth century, too, it seems possible that a tradition of instrumental accompaniment may have begun well before that date, though arguments about the continuity of traditions must remain speculative. Attempts, then, to connect any surviving Old English poetry with guild banquets will have to begin with a close reading of the poems and their relationships to one another in the manuscript sources.

In Booklet III of the Exeter Book, there is a sequence of four poems, intermixed with the riddles, that would seem to speak to the kinds of texts we should expect to have been used at the guild banquets.³⁶ Whether they were so used, we cannot say, but such a contextualization is productive of new — and, I daresay, interesting — readings of these texts.

The first of these four poems is *Homiletic Fragment III*, which Krapp and Dobbie (but not Muir) call *The Partridge*.³⁷ The poem bears comparison with the homiletic closure found in at least one surviving guild statute document, the Abbotsbury guild statutes. I have analysed Booklet III of the Exeter Book elsewhere as having been comprised of two manuscripts of riddles to which materials were added fore and aft; the two collections were then bound together to give us the configuration we now have, with the duplication by chance of Riddle 30, most likely because both collections contained the same riddle. Booklet III thus consists of riddles interspersed with non-riddlic poems.³⁸ I shall not argue here that the riddles were a part of guild banquet entertainments, although they might have

³⁵ See John M. Wasson, 'Exeter', in his *Devon: Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto, 1986), pp. 70–207, *passim*.

³⁶ On the division of the Exeter Book into separate booklets, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 95–147. On the analysis of the Vercelli Book into a tripartite structure, see Peter Lucas's essay in the present volume; Celia Sisam, *The Vercelli Book: A Late Tenth-Century Manuscript Containing Prose and Verse*, *Vercelli Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII*, EEMF, 19 (Copenhagen, 1976), pp. 37–44; and Donald G. Scragg, 'The Compilation of the Vercelli Book', *ASE*, 2 (1973), 189–207.

³⁷ The *editio princeps* of *Homiletic Fragment III* is *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, p. 275; for earlier editions of and commentary on the same material as part of the third poem of the Old English bestiary, consult the usual bibliographies for *The Partridge*.

³⁸ Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 159–62. A. N. Doane, in whose honour this essay has been written, developed wonderful insights into how to edit oral-derived texts by comparing the states of Riddle 30 in his essay 'Spacing, Placing and Effacing: Scribal Textuality and Exeter Riddle 30a/b', in *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 45–65. See also Roy Michael Liuzza, 'The Texts of the Old English Riddle 30', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 87 (1988), 1–15.

been. But I shall suggest that appending such poems as may have been used in those entertainments to potentially extra-monastic texts like the riddles is a reasonable hypothesis; certainly, its converse — that our so-called guild poems should be appended to clearly monastic texts, such as a copy of the Benedictine Rule or a Latin gospel book — would seem less likely to support the use of such poems before the guild. If, however, we posit an existing performance context — such as the guild banquet — for at least some of the works in Booklet III, then *Homiletic Fragment III* comes very close to what we would imagine a poem invoking a prayer for the living would look like, especially in its ending.

The Abbotsbury guild statutes ends with lines which are extremely interesting, because the text exhibits a poetic flourish, in the manner of Ælfric's sermons:

- Uton biddan God ælmihtigne georne
 mid inwerdre heortan, þæt he us miltsige,
 7 eacswa his halgan apostol sancta Petre,
 þæt he us geþingige
 5 7 urne weg geryme to ecere reste.
 Forþan þe we for his lufon þis gegyld gegaderodon.
 He hæfð þone anweald on heofenum
 þæt he mot lætan into heofenon
 þone þe he wyle 7 forwinnan þam þe he nele.
 10 Swa swa Crist sylf cwæð to him on his godspelle:
 'Petrus, ic betæce þe heofenan rices cæge,
 7 swa hwæt swa þu wylt habban gebunden ofer eorðan,
 þæt byð gebunden on heofenum. 7 swa hwæt swa ðu wylt habban
 unbunden ofer eorðan þæt byð unbunden on heofenum.'
 15 Uton habban hyht 7 hopan to him
 þæt he us bewite a her on worulde
 7 æfter forðsiðe ure sawla gehelpe.
 He us gebringe on ecere reste! Amen.³⁹

³⁹ 'Let us eagerly pray God Almighty from our heart within, that he have mercy on us, and also that his holy apostle, St Peter, plead for us and clear our way to eternal rest. Therefore have we assembled this guild for his love. He has the power in heaven that he may allow into heaven whom he will and exclude whom he will not. Just as Christ himself said to him in his gospel: "Peter, I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou have bound on earth, it shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou wish to have loosed on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven." Let us have hope and joy in him that he may ever protect us here in the world and be a help to our souls after death. May he bring us to eternal rest! Amen.' With alterations to the punctuation and slight changes in her translation, I have used Dorothy Whitelock's edition in *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, ed. by D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke, vol. I (Oxford, 1981), no. 67, pp. 519–20.

The end of the statutes exhibits a predilection for poetic expression — including alliteration, secondary linking techniques such as end-rhyme and near-rhyme, assonance and consonance, and paronomasia — in a manner that reminds one of Ælfric's rhythmical-prose compositions. This is an unusual kind of text to exhibit poetic features but, even if not all of these lines are equally verse-like, it is nearly impossible to ignore the metrical status of the four concluding lines (lines 15–18, above).⁴⁰ Although possibly modelled on earlier such statutes, the Abbotsbury guild statutes were composed just before the middle of the eleventh century, and they exhibit what Thomas Bredehoft has shown to be a rather standard evolution of Old English metre by the end of the first third of the eleventh century. We can be certain of the Abbotsbury statutes' date because, preserved in the format of a single-sheet writ, they begin with a declaration of the guild's origin, noting its founder, Orc:

Her cȳð on þisum gewrite þæt Orcy hæfð gegyfen þæge gyldealle 7 þone stede æt
 Abbodesbyrig Gode to lofe 7 sancta Petre 7 þam gyldeþe to agene on dæge 7 æfter dæge,
 him 7 his gebeddan to langsumum gemynde.⁴¹

Orc seems to have come to England with King Cnut and received land from that king in 1024. Although Whitelock notes that Orc was still alive between 1053 and 1058, she attributed the guild statutes to c. 1025–50.⁴² This locates the poetic additions of the writ to the same period for which Bredehoft has adduced metrical guidelines for late Old English poetic composition, and the poetic materials exhibit the same variations from the classic Old English metre that Bredehoft observed in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (MS C) annal for 1036, often called *The Death of Alfred*.⁴³

⁴⁰ To be a little less conservative, the first verse paragraph (beginning with *Uton*, lines 1–5) may be included in the poetic count. Lines 6–14 evince some internal rhyme and other poetic characteristics, but may finally be best addressed as a kind of prose designed to be read aloud, as the statutes were of course meant to be. For that reason, I have not marked the caesurae in this part of the text.

⁴¹ *Councils and Synods*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, I, 517. 'Here is it made known in this writ that Orc gave the guildhall and the place at Abbotsbury in praise of God and St Peter and for the guildship to own in his lifetime and after it, in lasting memory of himself and of his wife.' Based on Whitelock's translation. Following Simon Keynes, 'The Lost Cartulary of Abbotsbury', *ASE*, 18 (1989), 207–43 passim, I have preferred the form 'Orc' as a modernization of the MS reading 'Orcy', which Whitelock renders as 'Urki', noting five instances in which the ON name 'Urkir' appears. I have also changed Whitelock's 'document' to 'writ' and 'site' to 'place' while editing her translation.

⁴² *Councils and Synods*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, I, 516–17. On Orc's biography, see Keynes, 'The Lost Cartulary of Abbotsbury', pp. 207–09.

⁴³ Bredehoft, *Early English Metre*, pp. 70–98; also see Bredehoft, 'The Boundaries between Verse and Prose in Old English Literature', in *Old English Literature in its Manuscript Context*, ed.

This conjunction of circumstances is made even more interesting by the fact that the final line of the statutes, 'He us gebringe on ecere reste!', would seem to be a variation of tense and mood on Ælfric's phrase 'gebroht(e) to ecere reste', which occurs twice in that author's works but nowhere else in the surviving corpus of Old English. Moreover, the collocation of *betæce* with *heofenan rices cæge* is found only in homily 26 of the First Series of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, commemorating the passion of Saints Peter and Paul.⁴⁴ According to Simon Keynes's study of Abbotsbury's charters,⁴⁵ Orc established a monastery as well as a guild at Abbotsbury and filled it with monks formed at nearby Cernel (or Cerne Abbas) probably less than fifty years after Ælfric was abbot there. The observation that the Abbotsbury guild statutes echo Ælfric's work is significant for several reasons. It makes clear the orthodox piety Orc wanted to bring to his guild. The guild was not primarily a drinking society, nor was its banquet planned as such an event, if we remember that the statutes were a necessary presentation. Moreover, the Abbotsbury statutes are contemporary with their composition, so it is difficult to imagine a perfunctory performance of them when they were first promulgated, given the homiletic tone Orc built into them. The connection I perceive between these documents and Ælfric's works may indicate a greater cultural blurring of the monastic and lay cultures than we have generally been willing to credit, especially in the creation of some kinds of poetry. When we remember that it was lay patronage, not episcopal, on which Ælfric depended — Æthelweard and his powerful son Æthelmær, in particular — we should not be surprised to find a later nobleman within the same area of influence drawing on Ælfric's works as well. Furthermore, since Ælfrician rhetoric was more likely to have been noted by churchmen who were present at the guild banquets than by laymen, one must wonder whether Orc was addressing the expectation of their presence there by showing his knowledge of the scriptural authority for St Peter's pre-eminence. This perceived connection between Orc's guild statutes and Ælfric's authority may have implications for understanding the interaction of lay and religious influences in the parish. Furthermore, there is

by Joyce Tally Lionarons (Morgantown, 2004), pp. 139–72, and Bredehoft, 'Malcolm and Margaret: The Poem in Annal 1067D', in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 23 (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 31–48. I am very much in Professor Bredehoft's debt for discussing these matters with me and for giving me access to his works in press.

⁴⁴ Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies, The First Series*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS, s.s., 17 (Oxford, 1997), p. 388.

⁴⁵ Keynes, 'The Lost Cartulary of Abbotsbury', pp. 220–34.

evidence that Orc wanted to ensure that the place of the guild's meetings and, by extension, the kind of oversight of guild practices he initiated were not alienated from his original sense of their spiritual purposes.⁴⁶

Such concerns as these illuminate *Homiletic Fragment III*, which is a short enough fragment to be given in its entirety:

... fæger þæt word þe gecwæð wuldres ealdor:
 'In swa hwylce tiid swa ge mid treowe to me
 on hyge hweorfað, ond ge hellfirena
 sweartra geswicað, swa ic symle to eow
 5 mid siblufan sona gecyrre
 þurh milde mod. Ge beoð me sibban
 torhte tireadge talade ond rimde,
 beorhte gebroþor on bearna stæl.'
 Uton we þy geornor gode oliccan,
 10 firene feogan, friþes earnian,
 duguðe to dryhtne, þenden us dæg scine,
 þæt swa æþelne eardwica cyst
 in wuldres wlite wunian motan. *Finit.*⁴⁷

Metrical lines beginning with *uton* and commending people to God occur at the end of the Old English elegies and are formulaic, in that they are regularly found in this position, but we know — wherever else it may have been used — this phrasing was considered appropriate to close the reading of the statutes of Abbotsbury's guild and it was an appropriate ending for this particular poem. That the classic Old English metre is found in *Homiletic Fragment III*, and what to many of us now would seem to be but an approximation of metre in the Abbotsbury statutes, should, I think, be put down to the *mouvance* of the formulaic language of Old English homilies, which differs according to its date, its social context, and its relation to the oral and the written.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Keynes, 'The Lost Cartulary of Abbotsbury', pp. 208–09, 231.

⁴⁷ '... fair, that word which the Lord of Glory spoke: "In whatever hour as ye turn to me with faith in your hearts, and cease from the black crimes of hell, so I likewise will turn unto you immediately with brotherly affection manifested in a gentle spirit. You will then be reckoned and accounted to me as brethren, brightly and clearly glorious in the place of children." Let us all the more zealously supplicate God, hate our sins, deserve freedom from strife, as warriors before the Lord, while the day shines for us, so that we might inhabit in the beauty of heaven the most choice of dwellings, that noble place. *Finit.*' *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 275.

⁴⁸ Paul Zumthor explains *mouvance* as an 'intervocal', not 'intertextual', system in which a 'work' reflects a continuing interaction between written and oral culture at every stage of transmission; there is no purely oral and no purely written state of the text. See Zumthor, 'Intervocalité et

Study of the hand of the Exeter Book scribe puts the composition of *Homiletic Fragment III* no later than 970, and possibly earlier than that, so that some of the differences between the Abbotsbury statutes and the Exeter Book poem may be attributable to the different dates of these two texts.⁴⁹ The ideas expressed in the Exeter Book poem seem quite appropriate to the mood we might expect at a guild banquet, and this resemblance is reinforced with the hortatory paragraph beginning 'Uton ...' in both the statutes poem and *Homiletic Fragment III*.

If Booklet III is a separate codicological unit in the codex known as the Exeter Book, as I have long argued, then the poem on its first surviving leaf is preserved in an acephalous state. Because we do not know what came before the lines of this poem which have survived, we cannot know whether the poem was meant for that segment of the banquet devoted to the admonition of the living or the commemoration of the dead, or was simply a general prayer. Certainly, the next poem in the series concerns the issue raised in *Homiletic Fragment III* concerning the necessity of the living to turn towards the faith and good works required by God. Here, in *Soul and Body II*, we get the details of those black sins of hell that destroy a soul's hopes of ever entering heaven, sins that in this poem cannot be answered by the body, for only the soul is given a chance to speak (except in the poem's prologue, which introduces a narrative persona whose tone is not unlike that of the narrator in *Homiletic Fragment III*). Of course, the poem may have been used in numerous contexts where it seemed desirable either to create a graphic image of a sinner's just deserts after death, or to dramatize a central tenet of faith, namely that vain desire on the body's part can damn the future life of the eternal soul. The soul's monologue is so powerful in its terrifying images as to be theatrical when read aloud, and one can easily imagine it performed between the courses of a feast such a parish guild might hold, perhaps between the prayers for the living and those for the dead.

Of particular interest for this argument are the references to eating and drinking that occupy the poem. The body has of course been gluttonous and besotted; the soul thirsted for the food of God; and Gifer, the corpse-consuming worm that will recycle us all, has been able to feast in abandon:

mouvance', in his *La Lettre et la voix: de la 'littérature' médiévale* (Paris, 1987), pp. 160–68. Also see John Miles Foley, 'How Genres Leak in Traditional Verse', in *Unlocking the Wordboard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving, Jr.*, ed. by Mark C. Amodio and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Toronto, 2003), pp. 76–108 (pp. 101–02). This essay makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the interrelatedness of poetic and/or performed genres in Old English as well as in Greek, Serbian, and other traditions.

⁴⁹ On dating the hand of the Exeter Book, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 48–80.

Gifer hatte se wyrm, þam þe geaflas beoð
 nædle scearpran. Se geneþeð to
 ærest ealra on þam eorðscræfe;
 he þa tungan totyhð ond þa toðas þurhsmyhð,
 115 ond þa eagan þurhiteð ufon on þæt heafod
 ond to ætwelan oþrum gerymeð,
 wýrmum to wiste, þonne biþ þæt werge
 lic acolad þæt he longe ær
 werede mid wædum. Bið þonne wýrmes giefl,
 120 æt on eorþan. Þæt mæg gehwylcum
 men to gemyndum modsnotterra.⁵⁰

‘You will be food for the worm, his meal on the earth. Let that be a warning to the wise.’ The point of mentioning such disgusting gustatory details at the time of a feast would not have been to cancel the diners’ appetites, but rather to put the feast into a proper perspective for the serious members of the guild. The business of the parish guild was to safeguard souls in a number of ways, including the sponsorship of prayers, Masses, and pilgrimages. Reminding the participants in a feast that they want someday to join the heavenly feast, because the final earthly one is fairly unappetizing, would not have been beyond the imagination or the style of the early medieval period. The Church’s institution of fasting as a pious act polarized the distinction between feasting and fasting, leading to the implication that inordinate feasting was impious or worse — an attitude that could well have been shared by the parish guilds, since many guild statutes throughout the Middle Ages provided that the organizers of their banquet invite some needy people to join, or described how extra food could be distributed to the needy. Moreover, the situation creates a perfect example of the *Doppelszene*, which Lars Lönnroth has used effectively to analyse the complexity of performance contexts in medieval poetry.⁵¹

⁵⁰ ‘The worm is named *Gifer* or “Glutton”, whose jaws are sharper than a needle. First of all, it comes to the grave; it tears the tongue, and moves slowly through the teeth, and eats through the eyes from above into the head and reveals the way to others for feasting, to worms in feeding, when the weary body be cooled which he long before covered with clothing. That is the sustenance and food of worms in the earth. You will be food for the worm, his meal on the earth. Let that be a warning to the wise.’ *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 280.

⁵¹ Lars Lönnroth, ‘*Hjálmar’s Death-Song* and the Delivery of Eddic Poetry’, *Speculum*, 46 (1971), 1–20; on the application of *Doppelszene* to the Old English elegy via ‘The Old Man’s Lament’ in *Beowulf*, see Joseph Harris, “Scene” and “mise en abyme” in Beowulfian Narrative’, in *Gudar på jorden: Festskrift till Lars Lönnroth*, ed. by Stina Hansson and Mats Malm (Stockholm, 2000), pp. 322–38.

If we continue to interrogate Booklet III poems from the Exeter Book as having a possible place in the guild banquets, the next poem, *Deor*, is equally rewarding.⁵² Its first clause would seem to connect it to *Soul and Body II*:

Welund him be wurman wræces cunnade,
 anhydig eorl earfoða dreag,
 hæfde him to gesipbe sorge ond longap
 wintercealde wræce. ...⁵³

The phrase *be wurman* in the first half-line of *Deor* has long been considered 'difficult of interpretation', to cite the wording of the editors of the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, who mention editors and commentators from Grein to Malone who have either emended the manuscript reading (e.g. to *be wifman* 'with the woman', ignoring the expected unlauted form in the oblique case) or have kept the manuscript reading and have construed it, as a dative plural form, with reference to something other than worms or snakes (e.g. to serpentine tracings on a sword, hence metaphorically swords themselves).⁵⁴ One would not want to rule out any metaphorical interpretation of this phrase. Still, accepting *wurman* as dative plural, a different approach may be found even more attractive. The poet of *Deor* may be alluding not to swords, but to Gifer and 'Gifer's cohorts', whom the unfaithful will feed. Welund should perhaps then be seen as an icon of the unredeemed and probably unredeemable non-Christian. If this suggestion is accepted, then, like *Beowulf*, *Deor* posits both the potential nobility and the ultimate emptiness of what the author sees as the pre-Christian state. The invocation of Welund, the Germanic demi-god of the forge, represents this unredeemed state in the first stanza, as if to put the old gods in their places. The Boethian consolation with which the poem has sometimes been thought to end may in fact be addressing the issue of virtuous paganism, an issue that is also foregrounded in *Beowulf*,⁵⁵ but it also

⁵² James E. Anderson, *Two Literary Riddles in the Exeter Book* (Norman, 1986), pp. 44–56, argues that *Soul and Body II*, *Deor*, and *Wulf and Eadwacer* comprise a multi-text riddle. Marijane Osborn, 'The Text and Context of *Wulf and Eadwacer*', in *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*, ed. by Martin Green (Rutherford, 1983), pp. 174–89 (p. 187), implies that the compiler deliberately grouped these three poems together.

⁵³ 'Welund himself knew of exile with the worms, a resolute man, he suffered troubles, had sorrow and longing as his companions, winter-cold desolation ...'. *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 281.

⁵⁴ *The Exeter Book*, ed. by Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 318–19; see also *The Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, 567.

⁵⁵ On a possible critical connection between Boethius's *Consolatione Philosophiae* and *Deor*, see W. W. Lawrence, 'The Song of Deor', *Modern Philology*, 9 (1911–12), 23–45; Murray F.

requires us to imagine that the persona who speaks as *Deor* identifies with the Germanic characters whom he first describes. The poem's refrain, 'Þæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg', does not become a consolation at the end of the poem, then; rather, it expresses the hopeless state of even virtuous pagans. It becomes there simply an iteration, albeit personalized, of the position in which earthly honours are fleeting and produce only emptiness, while over it all hovers the image of the horrors of the grave. As Joseph Harris has concluded his study of the poem, '*Deor* applies its Old Testament pessimism exclusively to Germanic stories — as if to say goodbye to all that.'⁵⁶

Of the five English guild statutes of the early Middle Ages that survive from England, three were originally written in gospel books, as was an early twelfth-century list of village guild members associated with Exeter.⁵⁷ All of the surviving written statutes encode much that is very old and probably Germanic in origin, having to do with bearing witness and paying wergilds and drinking beer, but they also say much about works of faith and consideration for the state of the soul. We see that same dichotomy in the juxtaposition of these preoccupations in *Soul and Body II* and *Deor*.

Deor is followed in the Exeter Book by *Wulf and Eadwacer*, another Christian tragedy (of the sort peculiar to the Middle Ages) in which one's faith is judged by one's works, demonstrating how one loses both one's soul and the promise of eternal life. What becomes important about *Wulf and Eadwacer*, in my reading of that notoriously enigmatic poem, are the parallels to *Deor*, primarily in form and in the use of the first person narrator.⁵⁸ Both men and women were participants in the parish guilds, and both sexes attended guild banquets.⁵⁹ If we read *Wulf and*

Markland, 'Boethius, Alfred, and *Deor*', *Modern Philology*, 66 (1968), 1–4; L. Whitbread, 'The Pattern of Misfortune in *Deor* and Other Old English Poems', *Neophilologus*, 54 (1970), 167–83; W. F. Bolton, 'Boethius, Alfred, and *Deor* Again', *Modern Philology*, 69 (1972), 22–27; and Kevin Kiernan, '*Deor*: The Consolations of an Anglo-Saxon Boethius', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 79 (1978), 33–40.

⁵⁶ Joseph Harris, '*Deor* and its Refrain: Preliminaries to an Interpretation', *Traditio*, 43 (1987), 23–53 (p. 53).

⁵⁷ I have elsewhere connected this list to the mortuary list belonging to Exeter's Kalendar brethren, a civic group that was charged to pray monthly for the souls of the dead on their list for that month. The Kalendar brethren appear to have inherited, whether formally or informally, the rights of the old mid-tenth-century Exeter parish guild. Conner, 'Parish Guilds', pp. 257–73.

⁵⁸ For an introduction to the critical problems posed by *Wulf and Eadwacer*, see Anne L. Klink, *The Old English Elegies: A Critical Edition and Genre Study* (Montreal, 1992), pp. 47–49.

⁵⁹ See Orme, 'The Kalendar Brethren', p. 153.

Eadwacer in terms of a guild banquet performance, its implications are remarkable in their cultural significance. Whereas *Deor*, which is spoken in a male voice or voices, focuses on vengeance and its uselessness as a category — a notably non-heroic approach to the past — *Wulf and Eadwacer* focuses on the ineffectuality of a complementary dimension of heroic society, namely the use of force and violence, and it does so from a woman's perspective within the marriage contract. 'One cannot make strong what is destroyed with ease', the female speaker concludes. In other words, marriages require commitment from both sides, while abandoned infants cannot fend for themselves, even if one hopes that they might do so in order to assuage the guilt of abandoning them. The unrelieved desolation of the speaker's own soul is all that is left in the poem, if she, too, is seen as a negative example, drawn from the old heroic world that has been superseded by Christian order (and, from the guilds' point of view, by less fraught marital situations). This is exactly the sort of message we would expect parish guilds — with both men and women present at the banquets — to promulgate, largely for reasons that go hand-in-hand with Christian doctrine and with what we can learn about the guilds' ideologies from their statutes and their subsequent evolutionary histories.

In conclusion, it is possible to assert an explicit connection between Anglo-Saxon parish guilds and Old English poetry by means of the Abbotsbury guild statutes, which date from the first half of the eleventh century. Those statutes, when taken together with other information we have about the guilds, indicate the eschatological focus of guild banquets and justify study of how poetry expressing eschatological themes could have played a part in such practices as these. Although the poetry of the Exeter Book, which has chiefly concerned us here, is chronologically earlier than the surviving guild statutes from Abbotsbury with its poetic closure, the other four statutes are contemporary with or earlier than the date of the Exeter Book, and they verify a tradition of guilds and guild feasts at the time the poems were in circulation in the form in which we now have them. *Homiletic Fragment III* shows a close resemblance to parts of those statutes, as do the endings of some Exeter Book elegies already analysed as potential guild poems. Of course, much more needs to be done to tie up these ends. Continuing archival research remains a desideratum in attempting to construct the literary history towards which the present study points.

THE INSCRIBED FORM OF *EXETER MAXIMS* AND THE LAYOUT OF QUIRE XI OF THE EXETER BOOK

Brian O’Camb

The tripartite poem *Exeter Maxims*, a catalogue of maxims and gnomic statements inscribed on fols 88^v–92^v of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501, begins with a direct command to its readers or listeners to interrogate this text:

Frige mec frodum wordum. Ne læt þinne ferð onhælnē,
degol þæt þu deopost cunne. Nelle ic þe min dyrne gesecgan,
gif þu me þinne hygecraft hylest ond þine heortan geþohtas.¹

Encouraged by this speaker’s command, modern critics have revealed the ‘thoughts of [their] hearts’ through their critical interpretations of this work ever since the publication of the first modern edition of the Exeter Book by Benjamin Thorpe in

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¹ ‘Question me with wise words. Do not let the secrets of your heart, that which you know most intimately, be hidden. I will not declare my secret knowledge to you if you conceal from me your mind-craft and the thoughts of your heart.’ *The Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry: An Edition of Exeter Dean and Chapter MS 3501*, ed. by Bernard J. Muir, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Exeter, 2000), I, 248. The translation is mine, as are other translations of Old English in the present study.

1842.² Yet most interpretations of the text's secrets are grounded in modern editions of the poem rather than close study of it in its manuscript form. In this essay I argue that the material text of *Exeter Maxims*, which is preserved in quire XI of the Exeter Book, provides clues that indicate how this quire was compiled and produced. By analysing the layout of quire XI of the Exeter Book and the scribal division of its contents, I reconstruct the scribe's copy texts for the sequence of poems included in this quire. Whether or not these statements provide evidence for a common cultural tradition of oral proverbs (as is customarily assumed), they point to a textual tradition of gnomic poetry informing contemporary scribal culture — a culture that shaped this gnomic tradition, in turn. I also raise the possibility that the visual layout of a scribe's copy text could have influenced the scribal reformulation of proverbial sounding verses. In so doing, I attempt to reshape modern assumptions about the textual integrity of *Exeter Maxims* and this poem's relationship to oral and textual traditions. An approach of this kind contributes to a better understanding of how scribal performance could influence the formulaic production of some of the Exeter Book's poetic contents and, perhaps, Old English poetry more generally.³

It is necessary to comment at the start on the title, scribal division, and poetic integrity of *Exeter Maxims* in order to avoid confusion about my use of this title or my assumptions about the poem's structure. Over the years, editors have assigned a collective title to the gnomic verses written out by the scribe in three consecutive sections on fols 88^v–92^v of the Exeter Book. Furthermore, editors have inserted either a numeric marker ('I, II, III' or '1, 2, 3') or an alphabetic one ('A, B, C') into their editions to distinguish between the scribe's three discrete sections, which are marked off from one another in the manuscript by a single unfilled line of writing space. The most common editorial title assigned to the poem that I call *Exeter Maxims* is *Maxims I*, a designation intended to distinguish it from *Maxims II*, also known as *Cotton Maxims*, a catalogue of versified gnomic statements included in London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I. The Roman numeral 'I' in the title *Maxims I* can cause confusion, however, when used with the numerical labels 'I, II, III' designating the poem's three sections. Moreover, the editorial titles *Maxims I* and *Maxims II* provide readers with no sense of either poem's

² *Codex Exoniensis: A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry from a Manuscript in the Library of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter*, ed. by Benjamin Thorpe (London, 1842).

³ A. N. Doane has written a stimulating essay on the role of Anglo-Saxon scribes in a predominantly oral culture; see his 'The Ethnography of Scribal Writing and Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Scribe as Performer', *Oral Tradition*, 9 (1994), 420–39.

manuscript context. It is chiefly for this reason that I prefer the titles *Exeter Maxims* and *Cotton Maxims*, respectively,⁴ while referring to the separate scribal sections of the first of these poems as ‘A, B, and C’.⁵

Orality, Textuality, and Exeter Maxims

Thorpe’s prefatory remark that *Exeter Maxims* ‘is undoubtedly indebted to oral tradition for its preservation to the present day’⁶ has been echoed frequently by more recent critics and editors.⁷ Two chief factors have contributed to the enduring perception that this poem displays characteristics of ‘orally-based thought and expression’.⁸ One is the presence of the first-person speaker, as in the lines cited above. The second factor is the use of four ‘proverbious’ statements in *Exeter*

⁴ Donald G. Scragg, ‘Towards a New Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records’, in *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. by Sarah Larratt Keefer and Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 67–77 (pp. 69–71), makes a similar point in his discussion of editorial titles in an essay on the editing of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

⁵ My practice regarding the numeration of the poem’s lines deserves incidental mention. Based on my assumption that the three scribal sections of *Exeter Maxims* comprise a single unified poem, I follow the consecutive line numeration used in *The Exeter Book*, ed. by George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR, 3 (New York, 1936), pp. 156–63, rather than restarting the numeration in each section. Although Muir ascribes a new set of line numbers to each section (*Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 248–57), he also includes the consecutive line numeration used by Krapp and Dobbie.

⁶ *Codex Exoniensis*, ed. by Thorpe, p. ix. Thorpe assigns the poem the title ‘Gnomic Verses’.

⁷ T. A. Shippey, ‘Maxims in Old English Narrative: Literary Art or Traditional Wisdom?’, in *Oral Tradition / Literary Tradition: A Symposium*, ed. by Hans Bekker-Nielsen and others (Odense, 1977), pp. 28–46, observes that studying Old English proverbs without ‘the emotional and situational contexts which tell you how they are to be used and what they are agreed to mean’ reveals ‘the gap between oral and literary cultures’ (p. 29). Muir (*Exeter Anthology*, II, 556, note to line 46) declares that ‘maxims are utterances of “popular” wisdom’ (my italics). Lynn Remly, ‘The Anglo-Saxon Gnomic as Sacred Poetry’, *Folklore*, 82 (1971), 147–58, suggests that Old English gnomic poems ‘communicate experience to the listener by means of an *answerable* style’ (p. 148, my italics).

⁸ Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 168, citing a phrase from Walter Ong’s seminal study *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London, 1981). Following Ong, Cavill identifies five characteristics of the Old English gnomic poems which he believes are indicative of orally based thought, specifically: their additive structure, their aggregative contents, their use of redundant or ‘copious’ thematic units, their expression of conservative or traditional values, and their emphasis on information close to the human life world (pp. 168–70).

Maxims to which close parallels can be found in other Old English poems, including *The Seafarer*.⁹ These four parallels are worth quoting from the start.

Seal wif ond wer in woruld cennan | bearn mid gebyrdum (*Exeter Maxims* 24–25a)

... Pætte wer ond wif in woruld cennað | bearn mid gebyrdum (*Fates of Mortals* 2–3a)

Dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat — to þæs oft cymeð deað unþinged (*Exeter Maxims* 35)

Dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ — cymeð him se deað unþinged (*Seafarer* 106)

Styran sceal mon strongum mode (*Exeter Maxims* 50a)

Stieran mon sceal strongum mode (*Seafarer* 109a)

Widgongel wif word gespringeð — oft hy mon wommum bilihð (*Exeter Maxims* section A, 64)

Wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan. Oft hi mon wommum belihð (*Exeter Maxims* section B, 100)¹⁰

These near-equivalent statements are often cited as evidence for the widespread oral circulation of some of *Exeter Maxims*'s contents and as indicators of a common tradition of lore.¹¹ At least three possible explanations exist for these parallels, however. First, the parallels may survive because of an established proverbial tradition of 'oral' expression.¹² This explanation is the one most thoroughly explored

⁹ T. A. Shippey, 'The Wanderer and The Seafarer as Wisdom Poetry', in *Companion to Old English Poetry*, ed. by Henk Aertsen and Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr (Amsterdam, 1994), pp. 145–58, coins the term 'proverbiousness' to refer to a formal verbal quality of some Old English poetic statements that makes them 'sound as if they might be [...] acceptedly proverbial' (p. 151). To be precise, only three of the statements from *Exeter Maxims* with near-equivalent parallels are found in other Old English poems. The fourth pair of closely paralleled statements comes from two discrete scribal sections of *Exeter Maxims*, which I take to be a unified poetic composition written out in three parts.

¹⁰ The lines are cited from *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, with initial capitalization added. Translations of all the lines are provided below, in the course of my discussion of them. For now I wish only to call attention to the parallels in Old English phrasing. It should be noted that a fifth sententious statement from *Exeter Maxims* is paralleled by a statement found elsewhere in Old English poetry. *Exeter Maxims* 37a ('Eadig bið se þe in his eþle geþihð') closely resembles *The Seafarer* 107a ('Eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ'). The resemblance is perhaps insufficiently complex to be significant.

¹¹ Cavill, *Maxims*, p. 81, claims that 'Some Old English maxims become relatively fixed expressions. This suggests that they were not the exclusive preserve of one or two poets, but reflected a wider popularity'. Shippey, 'The Wanderer and The Seafarer', p. 157, claims that the gnomic statements at the end of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* 'spring from the "core-clichés" of a vanished culture, [...] their mode of thought is analogous to the skilful "proverbious" reworkings of formal expression found in pre-literate societies'.

¹² Cavill, *Maxims*, pp. 165–83, thoroughly discusses the relationship of Old English gnomic poems to orality.

and expressed in the critical literature on *Exeter Maxims*. Another explanation is that each pair shares a common textual source, whether or not that source is known.¹³ A third possibility is that the parallel statements resemble one another because of direct internal influence. That is to say, either the poet of *Exeter Maxims* or the scribe of that work may have directly copied or adapted one of the statements from the other.¹⁴ Indeed paremiologist Archer Taylor has argued that a statement's proverbiality may be called into doubt if it can be shown that that statement's use in another context constitutes a 'quotation from the passage under examination'.¹⁵ Following Taylor, I want to consider whether or not the statements in *Exeter Maxims* with parallels elsewhere in Old English poetry are common and proverbial. Thus, I will consider them in both their manuscript and their poetic contexts. In doing so, I explore the third possibility identified above; that is, that there may have been internal influence between the parallel statements inscribed in quire XI of the Exeter Book.

John Dagenais's provocative claim that 'the manuscript text [is paradoxically] a variety of oral performance' because of 'its uniqueness, [the] impossibility of its iteration, [and] its vulnerability to accidents of time and environment' encourages

¹³ Cavill, *Maxims*, p. 97, argues that lines 106–07 of *The Seafarer* derive 'from the Septuagint version of Proverbs 3. 34, recorded in I Peter 5. 5 and James 4. 6 as "Deus superbis resistit humilibus autem dat gratiam" (God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace)'. Muir (*Exeter Anthology*, II, 535) compares line 106 of *The Seafarer* with line 35 of *Exeter Maxims* and Psalm 13. 1: 'Dixit insipiens in corde suo: "Non est Deus"' (The foolish one says in his heart: 'There is no God'). Muir's edition also suggests that Matthew 5. 7, 'Beati misericordes quoniam ipse misericordiam consequentur' (Blessed are the merciful: they shall obtain mercy), provides an analogue for lines 107–08 of *The Seafarer*.

¹⁴ Throughout this essay, I adopt Carol B. Pasternack's inclusive use of the term 'scribe' to denote 'whoever has organized the verse sequences, whether the person inscribing the words, the person determining order but not inscribing, or the person later joining together separate booklets' (*The Textuality of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 148, n. 1). I use 'poet' to refer to the individual responsible for inventively composing verse sequences. I recognize that my use of the phrase 'the scribe' obscures the probable influence of multiple scribes who may have been involved in the transmission of the Exeter Book's various contents. I use the singular for the sake of convenience since just one scribe is generally thought to have written out the whole contents of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501. As I will show, however, it is not always possible to make hard-and-fast distinctions between the categories of poet and scribe.

¹⁵ Archer Taylor, *The Proverb* (Cambridge, MA, 1931), p. 7. Although much has been written on the distinctions made between proverbs, gnomic statements, and maxims, I use these terms interchangeably in this essay for the sake of convenience. For the most recent overview of these terms, see Cavill, *Maxims*, pp. 41–81.

a new look at *Exeter Maxims* and its relationship to oral and textual traditions.¹⁶ Although readers have noted the existence of this parallel material in the Exeter Book, no one as yet has made a careful study of the material existence of these statements and their parallels.¹⁷ It is noteworthy, however, that the four repeated statements occurring in *Exeter Maxims* are all inscribed in the first scribal section of that tripartite poem, section A. Because multiple copies of vernacular poetic texts are scarce, we may infer that the concentration of those statements in section A is textually and thematically significant. Moreover, the four near-verbatim parallels are not randomly distributed across the Anglo-Saxon literary corpus; rather, all of them occur in the Exeter Book. This book was written out by a single scribe,¹⁸ and so it may reflect that individual scribe's resources.¹⁹ Also worth noting

¹⁶ John Dagenais, 'That Bothersome Residue: Toward a Theory of the Physical Text', in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, 1991), pp. 246–59 (p. 255).

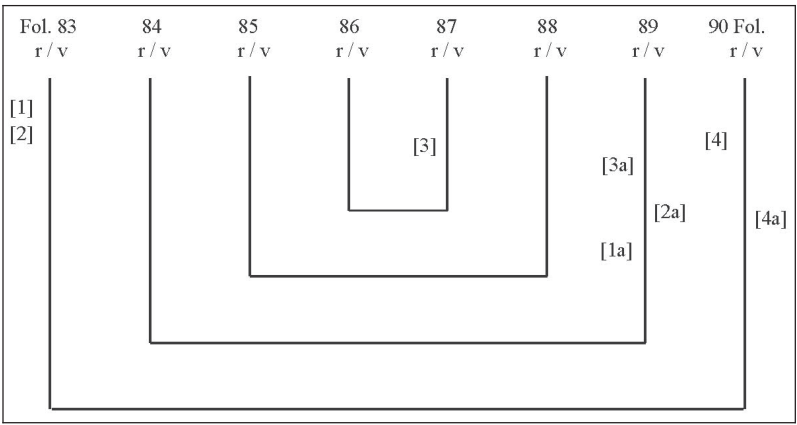
¹⁷ To my knowledge the only comments addressing the manuscript context of the near-equivalent statements are in J. M. Kirk's incomplete edition of the poem, 'A Critical Edition of the Old English Gnostic Poems in the Exeter Book and MS Cotton Tiberius B.i' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Brown University, 1976), pp. 11–13 and 71–76. Kirk does not consider these scribal and codicological details to be of any significance for our understanding of the textual integrity of *Exeter Maxims*.

¹⁸ Robin Flower, 'The Script of the Exeter Book', in *The Exeter Book of Old English Poetry*, facsimile edn by R. W. Chambers and others (London, 1933), pp. 83–90, once declared that 'we must suppose several scribes to have been employed' in the Exeter Book (p. 83). Despite Flower's claim, it is now generally accepted that a single scribe copied out all of the Exeter Book's contents and that this scribe is the same person who wrote out two Latin manuscripts: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 319 and London, Lambeth Palace, MS 149. Muir (*Exeter Anthology*, I, 25–27) provides a concise overview of the numerous arguments identifying the Exeter Book scribe's hand with that found in MSS Bodley 319 and Lambeth Palace 149. Also see Bernard J. Muir, 'Watching the Exeter Book Scribe Copy Old English and Latin Texts', *Manuscripta*, 35 (1991), 3–15, and Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 33–37 and 112–19.

¹⁹ Elsewhere I have shown that verses 45–50a of *Exeter Maxims* — a passage that includes one of the repeated proverbial statements identified above — probably paraphrase Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester's Old English Rule of St Benedict; see my article 'Bishop Æthelwold and the Shaping of the Old English *Exeter Maxims*', *English Studies*, 90 (2009), 253–73. I note this possibility because, if the influence of Æthelwold's translation of the Rule on *Exeter Maxims* is accepted, at least a portion of scribal section A of this poem must be dated no earlier than c. AD 940–50. Such a *terminus a quo* for this part of *Exeter Maxims* would suggest that some parts of the Exeter Book poems were being shaped, manipulated, or perhaps even created by a poet or scribe at a time close to when they were being written out in the manuscript. (For a discussion of the date of the Exeter Book, the script of which Muir dates to c. 965–75, see *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 1.)

is that all eight statements are localized within quire XI of the manuscript (fols 83–90). Quire XI begins with verse 103a of *The Seafarer* and ends with verse 114a of *Exeter Maxims*. Table 2 shows the makeup of quire XI of the Exeter Book and the relative location of each repeated statement on the folios of that quire.

Table 2. Diagram of quire XI of the Exeter Book, extending from *The Seafarer* 103a to *Exeter Maxims* 114a. Numbers in brackets indicate the approximate location of the four pairs of repeated statements within the quire.



- [1] dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ — cymeð him se deað unþinged (*Seafarer* 106)
[1a] dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat — to þæs oft cymeð deað unþinged (*Exeter Maxims* 35)
- [2] stieran mon sceal strongum mode (*Seafarer* 109a)
[2a] styran sceal mon strongum mode (*Exeter Maxims* 50a)
- [3] þætte wer ond wif in woruld cennað | bearn mid gebyrdum (*Fates of Mortals* 2–3a)
[3a] sceal wif ond wer in woruld cennan | bearn mid gebyrdum (*Exeter Maxims* 24–25a)
- [4] widgongel wif word gespringeð — oft hy mon wommum bilihð (*Exeter Maxims* (A) 64)
[4a] wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan. Oft hi mon wommum belihð (*Exeter Maxims* (B) 100)

Scribal Performance and the Inscribed Form of the Repeated Statements in Quire XI

Comparing the poetic context of each gnomic statement and its near-equivalent parallel introduces the possibility that there was some degree of influence from one statement to the other in quire XI of the Exeter Book. It will be helpful to turn first to the poetic context of the three statements connecting *The Seafarer* and *Exeter Maxims*. Lines 106–09 of *The Seafarer* read as follows:

106 Dol biþ se þe him his dryhten ne ondrædeþ — cymeð him se deað unþinged.
 107 Eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ — cymeð him seo ar of heofonum,
 108 meotod him þæt mod gestapelað, forþon he in his meahte gelyfeð.
 109 Stieran mon²⁰ sceal strongum mode, ond þæt on stapelum healdan.²¹

Line 35 of *Exeter Maxims*, inscribed on a later folio of quire XI, provides a near-equivalent repetition of *Seafarer* 106, and line 37 of *Exeter Maxims* also echoes *Seafarer* 107. Here are the lines from *Exeter Maxims*:

35 Dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat — to þæs oft cymeð deað unþinged.
 36 Snotre men sawlum beorgað, healdað hyra soð mid ryhte.
 37 Eadig bið se þe in his eþle gefihð; earm se him his frynd geswicað.²²

Verse 50a of *Exeter Maxims* provides a near-equivalent repetition of verse 109a of *The Seafarer* (as quoted above). Line 50 of *Exeter Maxims* reads as follows:

50 Styran sceal mon strongum mode. Storm oft holm gebringeþ.²³

Despite minor orthographic, syntactical, and lexical differences between line 106 of *The Seafarer* and line 35 of *Exeter Maxims*, the sentiment of each statement is nearly identical: a man who does not know of or recognize God's divine authority over him will be unprepared for death. Furthermore, lines 106–07 of *The Seafarer* form an antithetical pair of syntactically parallel gnomic statements (*Dol biþ se þe* and *Eadig biþ se þe*), a pair that is echoed in lines 35–37 of *Exeter Maxims*, though with an additional statement separating the two parallel clauses. The near-equivalent statements in verses 109a of *The Seafarer* and 50a of *Exeter Maxims* also correspond. *Exeter Maxims* also preserves the sequential ordering of the parallel statements in *The Seafarer*. In both poems, the statement concerning the foolish man — which is paired with a following statement about a blessed man — comes

²⁰ The manuscript reads *stieran mod*; I accept the standard emendation.

²¹ 'Foolish is he who does not fear his Lord; death will come to him without warning. Blessed is he who lives in humility; grace will come to him from heaven. The Lord will strengthen that disposition in him because he [the humble man] believes in his [God's] power. One must discipline a stubborn mind, and hold it on its foundations.' *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 233.

²² 'Foolish is he who does not know his Lord; to one such as this, death often comes without warning. Wise men protect their souls and maintain their truth with righteousness. Blessed is he who prospers in his homeland; wretched is he whom his friends deceive.' *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 249.

²³ 'A stubborn mind must be disciplined. A storm often brings the ocean [into a state of uproar].' *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 250. Since the grammar of this last clause looks ambiguous, it may be helpful to cite the rest of the sentence (50b–51a): 'Storm oft holm gebringeþ, | geofen in grimmum sælum' (A storm often brings the ocean, the sea, into a furious condition).

first and is later followed by a repeated statement about the need to control a stubborn mind. These repetitions demand explanation and may suggest some degree of influence between the parallel passages in *The Seafarer* and *Exeter Maxims* at some stage in their transmission history.

Close analysis of the near-equivalent statements about birth occurring in *The Fates of Mortals* and *Exeter Maxims* reveals a similar pattern of reworking proverbial material in the Exeter Book. The first statement about birth occurs as verses 2–3a of *The Fates of Mortals*, the poem immediately preceding *Exeter Maxims* in quire XI of the Exeter Book. That statement, in its poetic context, reads as follows:

- 1 Ful oft þæt gegonged, mid godes meahtum,
- 2 þætte wer ond wif in woruld cennað
- 3 bearn mid gebyrdum ond mid bleom gyrwað,
- 4 temiaþ ond tæcaþ,²⁴ oþþæt seo tid cymeð,
- 5 gegæð gearrimum, þæt þa geongan leomu,
- 6 liffaстан leoþu, geloden weorþað.
- 7 Fergað swa ond feþað fæder ond modor,
- 8 giefað ond gierwaþ. God ana wat
- 9 hwæt him weaxendum winter bringað.
- 10 Sumum þæt gegonged on geoguðfeore
- 11 þæt se endestaef earfedmæcgum
- 12 wealic weorþeð — sceal hine wulf etan,
- 13 har hæðstapa; hinsiþ þonne
- 14 modor bimurneð. Ne bið swylc monnes geweald.²⁵

Here is the near-equivalent statement in *Exeter Maxims*:

²⁴ I deviate from Muir's edition, which at this point preserves two *hapax legomena* found in the manuscript (*tennaþ* and *tetaþ*). I accept the emendation of verse 4a first proposed without explanation by Thorpe (*Codex Exoniensis*, ed. by Thorpe, p. 327) and more recently supported by Michael D. C. Drout, 'The Fortunes of Men 4a: Reasons for Adopting a Very Old Emendation', *Modern Philology*, 96 (1998), 184–87. Drout, assuming a minim error in the former word and a scribe's mistaking of square minuscule *c* for *t* in the latter one, reads *temiaþ ond tecaþ* 'they tame and teach'.

²⁵ 'Very often it comes about through the powers of God that a man and a woman bring forth children into the world through the process of childbirth. They give them shape, they discipline and instruct them, until the time comes, through the passing of years, when the young limbs and joints, secure in their existence, become grown up. A father and mother provide for and clothe the child, and so lead and carry it forward into life. God alone knows what the years will bring about for the growing children. For some unfortunate ones, it happens that a tragic death befalls them in childhood. A wolf, the grey heath-stepper, will devour a child; then his mother will lament his death. Such things are beyond the control of mortals.' *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 244.

- 23b Tu beoð gemæccan —
 24 sceal wif ond wer in woruld cennan
 25 bearn mid gebyrdum. Beam sceal on eorðan
 26 leafum liþan, leomu gnornian.
 27 Fus sceal feran, fæge sweltan
 28 ond dogra gehwam ymb gedal sacan
 29 middangeardes. Meotud ana wat
 30 hwær se cwealm cymeþ, þe heonan of cyþþe gewiteþ.²⁶

Verses 24–25a of *Exeter Maxims* ('sceal wif ond wer in woruld cennan | bearn mid gebyrdum') provide a near-verbatim repetition of the statement 'þætte wer ond wif in woruld cennað | bearn mid gebyrdum' (2–3a) inscribed near the beginning of *The Fates of Mortals*. Another correspondence between the passages is the use of the noun *leomu* 'limbs' in contexts associated with children, first with reference to the bodily limbs of children in verse 5b of *Fates*, and then as a metaphor for children in verse 26b of *Exeter Maxims*.²⁷ Moreover, the relatively close proximity of the parallel statements about birth to very similar gnomic statements distinguishing between the powers of God and humans to comprehend death provides another correspondence between the two passages. Verses 29b–30a of *Exeter Maxims* explicitly refer to God's knowledge of death: 'Meotud ana wat | hwær se cwealm cymeþ.' Similarly, verses 8b–9 of *The Fates of Mortals* euphemistically refer to God's knowledge of death: 'God ana wat | hwæt him weaxendum winter bringað.' Taken together, these correspondences suggest some degree of internal influence between the passages containing the parallel statements in *The Fates of Mortals* and *Exeter Maxims*, perhaps even the deliberate reworking of proverbial material by the scribe or poet.

The final two parallel statements found in quire XI occur in two different sections of the tripartite *Exeter Maxims*. Here is the first, which occurs in scribal section A:

²⁶ 'Two are conjugal mates; a woman and a man must bring forth children into the world through the process of childbirth. A tree on the earth must lose its leaves, must mourn for its limbs. The dead must depart, the doomed must die, and each day they struggle about their parting from the earth. The Lord alone knows where death goes when it departs from this familiar land.' *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 249. For the translation of 'hwær se cwealm cymeþ' (verse 30a), see the DOE, s.v. *cuman*, sense D.

²⁷ Susan E. Deskis, 'The Gnostic Woman in Old English Poetry', *Philological Quarterly*, 73 (1994), 133–49 (pp. 138–40), identifies and discusses an Old Norse 'metaphorical complex [...] in which the "lonely tree" represents a man or woman bereft of friends or family' and postulates that this complex may have influenced Old English gnomic poetry (p. 137).

- 63 Fæste feþa [sceal] stondan. Fæmne æt hyre bordan geriseð;
 64 widgongel wif word gespringeð — oft hy mon wommum bilihð,
 65 hæleð hy hospe mænað; oft hyre hleor abreopeð.²⁸

Verse 100b of *Exeter Maxims*, from section B of the poem, is a near-verbatim repetition of the statement just quoted:

- 100 Wif sceal wiþ wer wære gehealdan. Oft hi mon wommum belihð²⁹ —
 101 fela bið fæsthydigra; fela bið fyrwetgeornra,³⁰
 102 freoð hy fremde monnan, þonne se oþer feor gewiteþ.³¹

²⁸ ‘The foot-soldier must stand firm. It is fitting for a woman to be at her embroidery. A wandering woman gives rise to gossip; she is often blamed for her shameful actions; people speak of her with contempt, often her face gives away her shame.’ *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 250, with my insertion of the modal auxiliary verb *sceal* from the preceding line. On the above lineation, see note 5 and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, 557, note to line 54. My translation of this difficult passage needs additional comment. First, the noun *femne* usually denotes a ‘virgin’ or ‘unmarried / chaste (young) woman’ (*DOE*, s.v. *femne*, senses 1 and 1.a, respectively), but the word may be used more generally to refer to any woman (*ibid.*, sense 2). Second, most translators interpret the statement ‘oft hyre hleor abreopeð’ (65b) as a reference to the woman’s fading beauty based on the noun *hleor* (‘face’ or ‘cheek’). This is the sentiment conveyed by the *DOE*: ‘often her cheek will wither’ (*DOE*, s.v. *a-breopan*, sense 1.c ‘of physical beauty: to fade, fail, wither’). Yet in its primary sense, *a-breopan* means ‘to fail (in an enterprise or duty)’ when used of persons (as it is here), and that verb is used in some contexts to mean ‘to fail under trial’ (senses 1.a and 1.a.ii, respectively). The verb is also often used ‘of an action, enterprise: to fail’ (sense 1.b). Several factors suggest that verse 64b does not refer to a woman’s fading beauty, but rather to how her face expresses her emotional or sexual infidelities, whether they be real or perceived. First, verse 65b (‘oft hyre hleor abreopeð’) is syntactically parallel to verse 64b (‘oft hy mon wommum bilihð’). The parallelism of these half-lines implies a close connection in thought between them, namely that a woman is blamed for her shameful actions because her face often betrays her. Second, verse 65a (‘hæleð hy hospe mænað’) offers a variation of the sentiment expressed in verse 64b, namely that men blame women for their shameful actions; the passage seems to focus on a woman’s actions, not her beauty. Furthermore, in their poetic contexts, both parallel statements seem to address a woman’s sexual conduct: it is said that a wandering woman gives rise to gossip in 64a, and that a woman must be faithful to her husband in 100a. For an alternative thematic interpretation of these passages, see Deskis, ‘The Gnostic Woman’. For a discussion of problems of lexicography and literary interpretation that has a bearing on my interpretation of *a-breopan* in *Exeter Maxims*, see Fred C. Robinson, ‘Lexicography and Literary Criticism: A Caveat’, in *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature in Honour of Herbert Dean Meritt*, ed. by James L. Rosier (The Hague, 1970), pp. 99–110.

²⁹ The manuscript reads *belihð*.

³⁰ The manuscript reads *fyrwetgeornra*.

³¹ ‘A woman must hold true to her man; she is often blamed for her shameful actions; many women are constant in mind, many women are prone to curiosity; they give their love to a stranger when the other one travels afar.’ *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, I, 253. I interpret *fæsthydigra* (101a) and *fyrwetgeornra* (101b) as partitive genitives.

The sentiment and content of the parallel statements in lines 64 and 100 (especially the B-verses) are nearly identical: a woman is 'often blamed for her shameful actions'. Yet when we compare the parallel statements in their respective poetic contexts, other subtle correspondences between the two passages emerge. Both A-verses are hypermetric and include the noun *wif* 'woman', which alliterates with three other stressed words (*widgongel*, *word*, and *womum* in line 64, and *wer*, *were*, and *womum* in line 100). Furthermore, in both passages the parallel statements occur in close proximity to the word *fest* (the adverb *faste* in verse 63a and the first simplex of *festhydigra* in 101a). Additional evidence to suggest a relationship between the passage containing the first statement and the parallel one inscribed later in quire XI may be present in the scribe's spellings of the verb *belihð*. In verse 64b, the third-person singular form of the verb *be-lean* 'to blame' or 'to reproach' is spelled *bilihð*. In verse 100b the scribe relocates the consonant *h*, spelling what is apparently the same verb as *behlið*. Editors of *Exeter Maxims* regularly emend the spelling of that word in section B from *behlið* to *belihð* based on the spelling in section A, interpreting this as a case of metathesis.³² While I agree with these editorial interventions, I want to suggest that the scribe's spelling of the verb in 100b may provide tentative evidence for influence of the first statement on the second parallel statement. In its poetic context, the first statement immediately precedes several words, whether stressed or unstressed, beginning with *h*: *hæledð*, *hy*, *hospe*, *hyre*, and *hleor* all occur in line 65 of *Exeter Maxims*. Furthermore, the initial stressed word in 65b (*hleor*) contains a consonant cluster similar to what is found in the scribe's spelling of the stressed finite verb *behlið* following the unstressed form of the prepositional adverb *be-*. In other words, the scribe's spelling of *behlið* in verse 100b closely parallels the consonantal cluster found in *hleor*, the word that determines the alliteration of line 65. Again, close comparison of the inscribed form of lines 64 and 100 of *Exeter Maxims* reveals parallels that suggest some degree of internal influence between them.

Scribal Performance in Exeter Maxims: Some Codicological Clues from Quire XI

Questions remain as to the purpose and thematic significance of these adaptations (if that is what they are) and the direction of influence between each pair of

³² Carl T. Berkhout, 'A Critical Edition of the Old English Gnostic Poems' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Notre Dame, 1975), p. 105, and *Exeter Anthology*, ed. by Muir, II, 559, note to 30b, both cite metathesis to explain the verb's spelling in line 100.

repeated statements. Codicology may provide answers to these questions. The three sections of *Exeter Maxims* are inscribed in quire XI (fols 83–90) and quire XII (fols 91–97) of the Exeter Book, which is made up of seventeen quires in all. All of the near-equivalent statements are inscribed in quire XI — an exceptional one because of the way it has been pricked and ruled. Thirteen of the seventeen quires in the Exeter Book are ruled for twenty-two lines of text per folio page.³³ The four exceptions to this ruling practice are quires I, VI, XI, and XII. Quires I and VI are pricked and ruled for twenty-three lines of text per folio page rather than the usual twenty-two,³⁴ presumably to allow enough room for the texts being copied from the scribe's exemplar(s). Quire XII is pricked for the usual twenty-two lines but is unusually ruled. Folios 91^r–93^r of quire XII, though pricked for twenty-two lines, have only twenty-one rulings, all of which are filled. Folios 93^v–97^v use all the prickings and have twenty-two lines ruled and written. These codicological details collectively attest to the exceptional quality of quire XI's material fabric: quire XI is the only quire in the manuscript that is pricked *and* ruled for fewer than twenty-two lines of text per folio page. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the pricking and ruling of quire XI for twenty-one lines rather than the usual twenty-two resulted from an oversight by the person who prepared the parchment for this quire. The oversight in quire XI's preparation caused the recto and verso of each folio page to be short a single line of text, relative to the exemplar. Sixteen lines of text therefore could not be included in this quire. The mispricking and misruling of quire XI may help to explain why section A of *Exeter Maxims* contains four statements comprising near-equivalent repetitions of other gnomic statements

³³ My count includes quire XVII⁸ (wants 1, 7, 8) — that is, fols 126–30 — which has suffered substantial damage. Although the burn damage in quire XVII makes it difficult to determine with certainty if those folios were pricked and ruled for twenty-two lines per page, the burn pattern on fol. 126^v is such that at least a portion of text from every line of writing space on that folio survives. Twenty-two lines on this folio were filled, as is standard for the manuscript. It is reasonable to assume that the quire was pricked and ruled for the same number of lines. For a discussion of this quire's construction, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 108–09. For an electronic facsimile of fol. 126^v, see *The [digital] Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*, ed. by Bernard J. Muir and compiled by Nick Kennedy (Exeter, 2006), hereafter cited as *The e-Exeter Anthology*.

³⁴ Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 137, observes that quires XIII and XV follow the codex's standard ruling of twenty-two lines per folio page even though they are pricked for twenty-three lines of text. To add to Conner's observations, I would note that the same is true of quire III. Twenty-three prick marks are clearly evident in *The e-Exeter Anthology*, though only twenty-two lines of text are filled by the scribe.

inscribed in the quire. As Figure 10 shows, the last verses of section B of *Exeter Maxims* (verses 114b–137) run over into quire XII, filling lines one through sixteen of its first folio (fol. 91^r). The number of filled lines on fol. 91^r exactly corresponds to the sixteen lines that were not included in quire XI because of its mispricking. It is unlikely that the correspondence is coincidental.³⁵ If we account for the lines displaced through the mispricking of quire XI by the corresponding number of lines on each folio, a pattern emerges in the quire's visual layout. If quire XI had been pricked and ruled for the usual twenty-two lines per folio, and if those twenty-two lines had been filled in accordingly, then several poems (or poetic sections)³⁶ in this quire would have started on line 1 of their respective folios. Section B of *Exeter Maxims* would then have ended on the last line of fol. 90^v, the final line of the last folio of quire XI. Section C of *Exeter Maxims* would have started on the first folio of quire XII, with its bold, ornamented capital **R** standing on line 1 at the top of the twelfth quire's head (see Figure 11).

Shifting the contents of quire XI in this manner has a 'domino effect' on the visual layout of the texts included within it. Section A of *Exeter Maxims* would have started on line one of fol. 88^v (compare the actual manuscript layout in Figure 12 with my hypothetical layout in Figure 13). The pattern of starting a poem or poetic section at the top of a folio page also holds true for *The Fates of Mortals*. *The Fates of Mortals* starts on line 10 of fol. 87^r after a blank line separating it from the end of *Widsith*.³⁷ Shifting quire XI's contents by the nine lines of writing lost

³⁵ I say unlikely rather than impossible because the end of *The Seafarer* (verses 103a–124) fills lines one through sixteen of the first folio of quire XI (fol. 83^v). This may possibly explain the runover of sixteen lines of text from quire XI to XII. One factor argues against this alternative explanation, however. Editors and critics assume on the basis of metrical deficiencies in lines 112 and 113 of *The Seafarer* that something was omitted from that poem. Although it is impossible to know how much text was omitted during the poem's scribal transmission(s), it is clear that *The Seafarer* has been truncated to some degree. Robert D. Stevick, 'The Text and Composition of *The Seafarer*', *PMLA*, 80 (1965), 332–36, suggests that *The Seafarer* is an unfinished draft that had yet to be revised and reworked. Krapp and Dobbie (*The Exeter Book*, p. 298, n. 112) speculate that only a few words have been lost. Even this conservative estimate is significant to my argument since the addition of even a single word to the writing space on fol. 83^v would push the written text to line 17, since line 16 is entirely filled from the left marginal ruling to the right marginal ruling.

³⁶ See further Augustine Philip, 'The Exeter Scribe and the Unity of the *Crist*', *PMLA*, 55 (1940), 903–09.

³⁷ The pattern of beginning a poem or poetic section at the head of a folio page does not hold throughout the entire quire, however. The beginnings of *Widsith*, *Vainglory*, and section B of *Exeter Maxims* do not shift to the top of their respective folio pages.

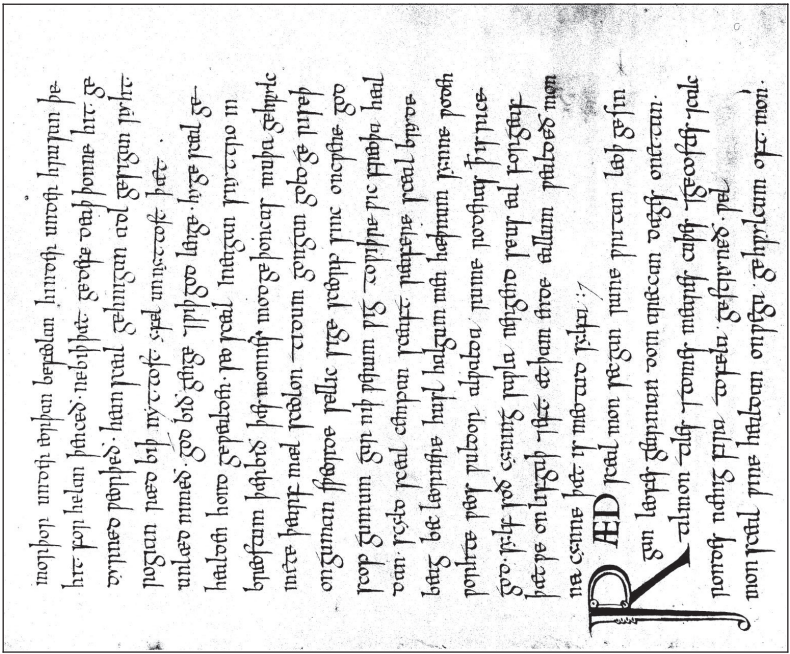


Figure 10. Fol. 91^r of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501, containing the end of section B and the beginning of section C of *Exeter Maxims*. Third quarter of the tenth century. Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral.

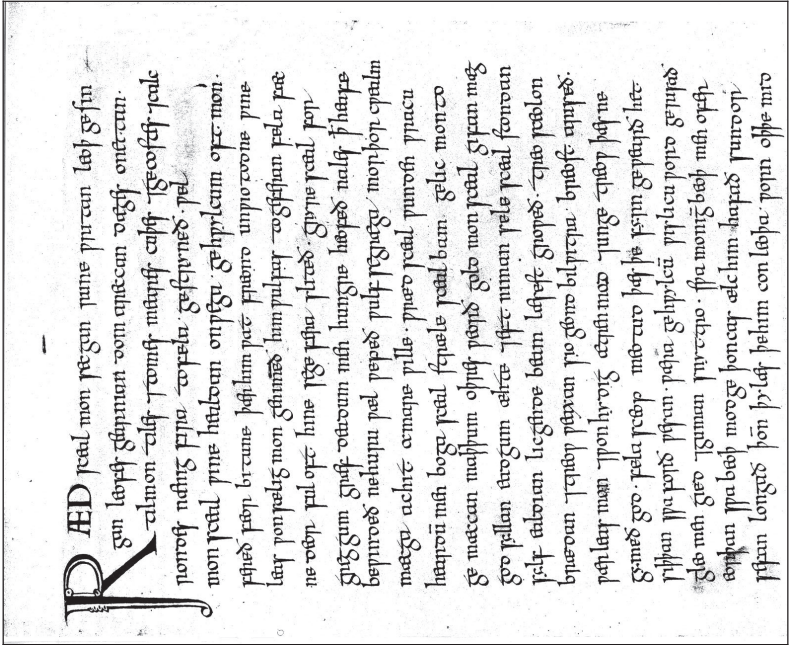


Figure 11. Hypothetical reconstruction of fol. 91^v of the Exeter Book using a utility knife to cut and combine photocopied images of fols 91^r and 91^v of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501.

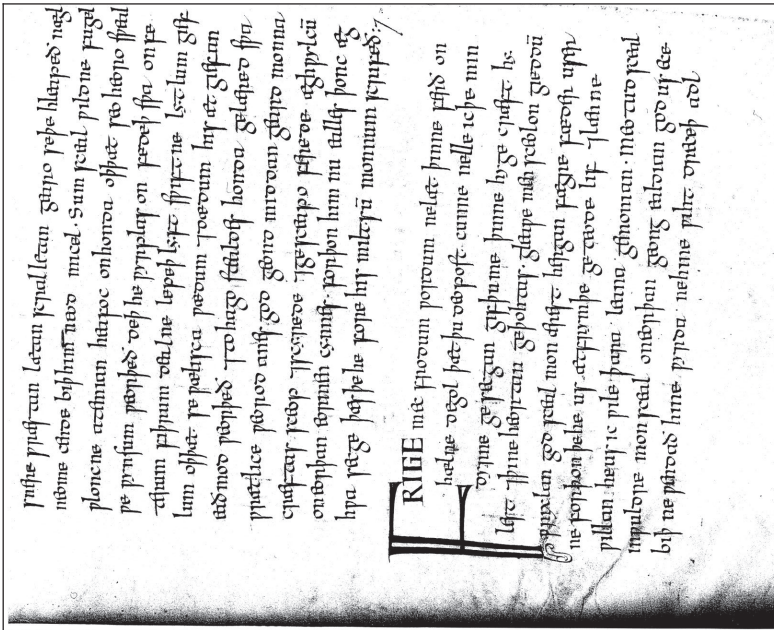


Figure 12. Fol. 88r of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501, containing the end of *The Fates of Mortals* and the start of section A of *Exeter Maxims*. Third quarter of the tenth century. Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Exeter Cathedral.

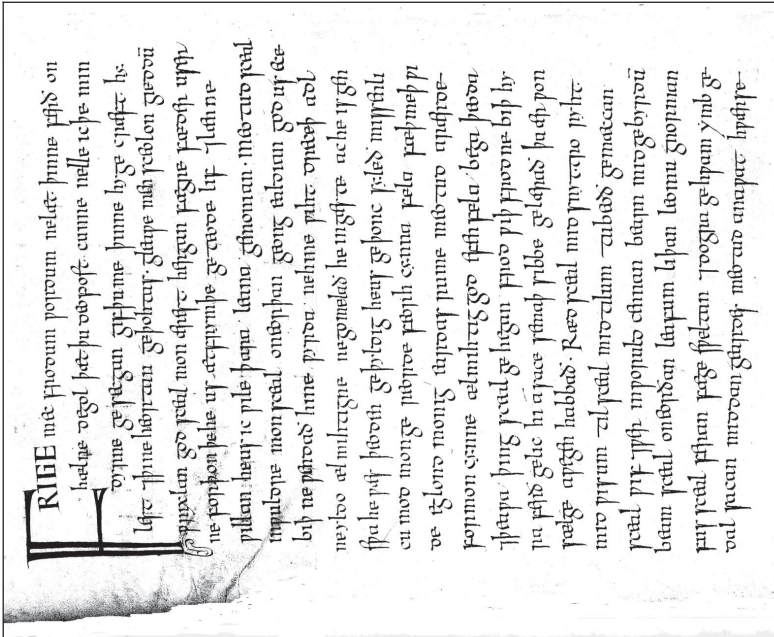


Figure 13. Hypothetical reconstruction of fol. 88v of the Exeter Book using a utility knife to cut and combine photocopied images of fols 88r and 89r of Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501.

between fols 83^r and 87^r, we see that *The Fates of Mortals* would have started on line 1 of fol. 87^r, its large, ornamented capital **F** standing at the head of the folio page (compare Figure 14 and Figure 15).³⁸

Accounting for the anomalous pricking and ruling of quire XI of the Exeter Book provides a sense of what the scribe's exemplar(s) looked like. Doing so also reveals that the first iteration of each near-verbatim statement inscribed in quire XI appeared in a place of visual prominence in the scribe's exemplar(s). Perhaps this explains why *Exeter Maxims* repeats particular statements. The phrase that is repeated was inscribed earlier in the exemplar, in a manner that caught the scribe's eye. The two statements from *The Seafarer* that are repeated in near-verbatim form in section A of *Exeter Maxims* appear in lines 3–6 of fol. 83^r. These verses occupy a visually prominent position in the manuscript because they are inscribed near the top of the quire's first folio, and they probably appeared in a similar position in the scribe's exemplar.³⁹ Likewise, if quire XI had been pricked for twenty-two lines per folio as was probably intended, then the gnomic statement addressing birth in *The Fates of Mortals* would have appeared in line 1 of folio 87^r, in close proximity to the large, ornamented majuscule **F** (see Figure 15). The fact that this statement is repeated as verses 24–25a of *Exeter Maxims* again suggests that at some point in the Exeter Book's transmission history, a scribe or poet adapted a statement inscribed in a position of visual prominence in his exemplar. In short, I am suggesting that some of the poetic statements included in *Exeter Maxims* were compiled or

³⁸ I assume the scribe would not have left a blank line to separate *The Fates of Mortals* from *Widsith* and section A of *Exeter Maxims* from *The Fates of Mortals* because the poems would have ended and begun on opposite sides of the folio page, thus providing a natural separation of texts. Analogous examples of this layout pattern are found on fols 76 and 81 of the Exeter Book. The scribe does not leave a blank line between the end of *Juliana* on fol. 76^r and the start of *The Wanderer* on fol. 76^v. Likewise *Precepts* ends on the last line of fol. 81^r and *The Seafarer* begins on the first line of fol. 81^v. For facsimiles of these folios, see *The e-Exeter Anthology*. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 134, also suggests that the Exeter Book scribe was interested in the visual appearance and layout of the capitals in his exemplar, proposing that the scribe used the capital **F** on fol. 78^r as a template for the one on fol. 88^r. Similarly, A. N. Doane, 'Spacing, Placing Effacing: Scribal Textuality and Exeter Riddle 30 a/b', in *New Approaches to Editing Old English Verse*, ed. by Keefer and O'Brien O'Keeffe, pp. 45–65, has shown that the Exeter Book scribe paid careful attention to 'the spatial arrangements on the written surface' (p. 64).

³⁹ See *The e-Exeter Anthology* for a facsimile of fol. 83^r.

adapted by a scribe or poet who took a keen interest in the visual layout of written texts included in his exemplar.⁴⁰

I would describe the *Maxims* poet's compositional technique as 'visually formulaic',⁴¹ a phrase that I introduce to distinguish my interpretation of Old English poetic production from the views of other critics. For instance, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has addressed how Latin textuality influenced the layout of Old English poems. In her thought-provoking discussion of scribal pointing in the four major Old English poetic codices, O'Brien O'Keeffe argues that the relatively sparse use of punctuation in those manuscripts indicates that early readers of Anglo-Saxon verse 'brought to the text necessary interpretive information aided by an understanding of formulaic convention'. She goes on to suggest that the more regular use of visual cues to punctuate relatively late manuscripts containing Old English verse 'charts the gradual alienation of the reader from vital formulaic tradition' over time.⁴² Based on the evidence found in quire XI of the Exeter Book — evidence that, I recognize, is unique to this particular manuscript — I offer a different though not wholly unrelated suggestion, namely that Anglo-Saxon scribes may have sometimes integrated the visual elements of texts into the formulaic tradition of Old English poetry. Quire XI of the Exeter Book invites me to speculate that it charts a process whereby a scribe 'formulizes' texts that he visualizes mentally, thus adding to the reservoir of oral-formulaic phrasing available to him. As is noted above, A. N. Doane has shown that the 'visuality' of this dynamic distinguishes the poetic performance of the Exeter Book scribe: 'what for him constituted the "text" was not the phonemic string but the spatial arrangements on the written surface' of the manuscript. While I agree with Doane that the scribe took an interest in the visual layout and arrangement of the Exeter Book's contents, I am not convinced

⁴⁰ Additional evidence of a slightly different type further supports my suggestion that the scribe or poet of *Exeter Maxims* composed verses based on statements inscribed in positions of visual prominence in his exemplar. Berkhout, 'Critical Edition', pp. 42–43, calls attention to a repeated set of verbal collocations in section B of *Exeter Maxims*. As Berkhout observes, verses 114b–116 ('morþor under eorþan befeolan, | hinder under hrusan, þe hit forhelan þenceð; | ne biþ þæt gedefe deap, þonne hit gedyrned weorpeð') echo lines 78–80a ('**Deop deada** wæg **dyrne** bið lengest; | **holen** sceal inæled'). What Berkhout overlooks, however, is the fact that both of these collocations closely parallel the opening lines of section A of *Exeter Maxims* ('Ne læt þinne ferð onhæln, | degol þæt þu **deop**ost cunne. Nelle ic þe min **dyrne** gesecgan'), lines that probably appeared in a position of visual prominence in the scribe's exemplar (see Figure 13).

⁴¹ I borrow this useful phrase from A. N. Doane, who suggested it in conversation.

⁴² Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 4 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 192.

that the scribe's poetic performance was a 'perpetuation of already-familiar utterances' whose authority (Doane implies) resides passively 'with the tradition, which lives in the scribes' memories as well as on the page'.⁴³ Rather, the evidence presented here seems to indicate an active scribe whose eye was as sharp as his ear. One can imagine that the scribe looked back at his exemplar, where he saw the text he was copying and returned to the present page to write out the verses. In so doing, he recomposed them in proverbial language that closely paralleled his exemplar. What is so intriguing about this scribe's performance is that he seems to shift seamlessly between what he sees with his eyes to what must be an aural and memorial recasting of those lines in new verse, thus eliding the boundary between scribal copying and poetic composition. In any event, the parallels connecting the passages analysed above suggest that the Exeter scribe possessed the ability to recall the inscribed visual form of familiar utterances and later to recompose those proverbial utterances in compelling ways, thus reinventing the tradition as he committed part of it to the manuscript page for posterity.

Some Conclusions

While it is impossible to know with certainty whether the textual layout of quire XI of the Exeter Book was copied from an existing poetic anthology already compiled and assembled elsewhere,⁴⁴ or if the Exeter Book scribe arranged poems drawn from various exemplars into a visually appealing textual sequence,⁴⁵ quire XI's material state still provides tantalizing clues about the production of this quire of the Exeter Book and the contents and structural integrity of the tripartite *Exeter Maxims*.

I have shown, first of all, that the repeated gnomic statements in *Exeter Maxims* do not provide conclusive evidence for the widespread oral circulation of traditional proverbial phrases, as has often been assumed. The localization of these repeated statements (and their near-verbatim parallels) within a single manuscript

⁴³ Doane, 'Spacing, Placing and Effacing', p. 64 and 65, respectively. Also see note 38 above.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), suggests that the Exeter Book was 'transcribed continuously from a collection already made' (p. 97).

⁴⁵ Doane, 'Spacing, Placing Effacing', p. 58, suggests that the Exeter Book scribe was working from multiple exemplars on the basis of Riddle 30a/b (which, Doane argues, was accidentally copied twice by the scribe after he misarranged his exemplars).

quire written out by a single scribe suggests that the preservation and circulation of those statements are as indebted to textual traditions as they are to oral ones.

A related inference is that whoever composed the repeated statements in quire XI of the Exeter Book worked from textual sources that he arranged into a continuous poetic sequence as he wrote them out. While it remains possible that the repeated statements derive from a common textual source that has been lost, or else represent echoes of an established body of proverbial expressions, the evidence presented here invites speculation that the scribe was reworking verses as he went.⁴⁶ It is a reasonable inference that the Exeter scribe adapted the repeated gnomic statements in *Exeter Maxims* either from his exemplar or from poems inscribed earlier in quire XI. Hypothetically speaking, one can imagine that the scribe found the repeated statements included in *Exeter Maxims* while flipping back and forth through quire XI or its exemplar as he copied out the poem. The inscribed statement from *The Fates of Mortals* on fol. 87^r of the Exeter Book that is repeated in *Exeter Maxims* on fol. 89^r appears on the central bifolium of quire XI (fols 86 and 87).⁴⁷ This is the precise middle of the quire, a natural place for the scribe to open a normal quire not yet sewn into a manuscript while copying out quire XI of the Exeter Book. The statements from *The Seafarer* inscribed on fol. 83^r that are repeated in *Exeter Maxims* on fol. 89 recto and verso similarly appear in a position in quire XI of the Exeter Book that would have been easily accessible to the scribe (and that almost certainly appeared in the same position in the exemplar). Alternatively it is possible that the Exeter scribe remembered the statements inscribed towards the front of quire XI or its exemplar and then recomposed verses based on those statements for inclusion in *Exeter Maxims*.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Roy M. Liuzza, 'The Old English *Christ* and *Guthlac*: Texts, Manuscripts, and Critics', *Review of English Studies*, 41 (1990), 1–11, has suggested that elsewhere in the manuscript, the Exeter Book scribe adapted or added material to form a coherent sequence of poetic texts.

⁴⁷ The statement probably appeared on the equivalent folio of the hypothetical exemplar — albeit on a different line of that folio — as is shown on Figures 14 and 15.

⁴⁸ It is possible that at least one reader of the Exeter Book recognized the repeated statements included on fol. 89^r. The words *bega þeoda* appear at the end of line 5 of fol. 89^r. Two parallel drypoint lines, incised at an acute angle, are drawn from the tail of the final 'a' in *þeoda* to the edge of the folio, terminating at a spot even with line 9. Another line or crease at approximately the same angle, though extending from a position even with line 11 at the edge of fol. 89^r down to the words inscribed on line 18 of the folio, effectively 'brackets' the contents of these lines. I cannot determine whether the lower line was an incidental crease or if it followed a drypoint line incised in the folio membrane. No matter how these lines came into the margin of fol. 89^r, they bracket the repeated statements inscribed there, and their presence may suggest that a reader of the Exeter Book

Tentative conclusions concerning the structural integrity of the tripartite *Exeter Maxims* may also be drawn. The textual and thematic evidence presented in this essay demonstrates clear connections between sections A and B of the poem. It is an intriguing possibility that whoever was responsible for composing certain proverbial verses included in section A of *Exeter Maxims* was reshaping visually prominent statements of a similar character that figure in the preceding poems now known as *The Seafarer* and *The Fates of Mortals*. Likewise, orthographic and verbal evidence tentatively suggests that some verses included in section B of *Exeter Maxims* (lines 100–03) may have been adapted from material included in section A. To put it another way, sections A and B may have been produced using similar compositional methods, and so there seems to exist a closer authorial connection between them than has been previously recognized. There is less evidence for a textual relationship between sections A and B of *Exeter Maxims* and section C, which probably initiated the sequence of poems inscribed in quire XII. Still, minor verbal, thematic, and metrical connections exist between section C and sections A and B,⁴⁹ making it possible that section C was a separate poem and that sections A and B were recomposed as bridge pieces at some point in the transmission history of the Exeter Book's poetic contents.

This possibility is significant because it implies that the Exeter Book scribe or compiler crafted thematic and verbal connections between the sections in order to join them into a kind of poetic triptych, analogous to the tripartite pictures or carvings that were in common use as altar-pieces during the Middle Ages. A similar arrangement of texts into thematically meaningful sequences occurs elsewhere in the Exeter Book. A notable example is the set of three poetic sequences addressing Christ near the manuscript's beginning.⁵⁰

recognized the repeated material (see Table 2). Analogous patterns of angled drypoint lines appear in the margins of quire VII of the manuscript; see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 101 and 122–23 and plate XVI (a).

⁴⁹ For instance, the relatively rare poetic compound *wonselig*, which occurs seven times in the corpus of surviving Old English, and only in poetry, is used in similar thematic contexts in sections A (line 21) and C (line 146) of *Exeter Maxims*. I briefly consider intellectual and thematic connections between sections A and C of the poem elsewhere ('Bishop Æthelwold', p. 270, n. 67). On the frequent use of single half-lines in sections A and C of *Exeter Maxims*, see A. J. Bliss, 'Single Half-Lines in Old English Poetry', *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 18 (1971), 442–49.

⁵⁰ Colin Chase, 'God's Presence through Grace as the Theme of Cynewulf's *Christ II* and the Relationship of this Theme to *Christ I* and *Christ III*', *ASE*, 3 (1974), 87–101, persuasively argues that the poet Cynewulf 'systematically altered *Christ II* [...] to establish an implicit relationship between the three *Christ* poems' (p. 99). Dolores W. Frese, 'The Art of Cynewulf's Runic

In any event, the repeated statements in *Exeter Maxims* raise the intriguing possibility that an active scribe contributed verses as he copied the texts in quire XI from his exemplar. I have suggested that the poems included in this quire of the Exeter Book were arranged in sequences based in part on their visual appearance in the manuscript, and that the scribe shaped or reworked verses based on statements occurring in positions of visual prominence in the exemplar. On the basis of quire XI, we may infer that visual features of its exemplar played a more significant role in how this famous codex was arranged and produced than has been previously recognized. The image of a scribe who was capable of composing vernacular verse, and who may also have had a hand in compiling and arranging sequences of texts, complicates our understanding of authorship in the early Middle Ages by calling attention to the areas of overlap between the various creative roles involved in the production of a manuscript of this kind.

Signatures', in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation for John C. McGalliard*, ed. by Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores W. Frese (Notre Dame, 1975), pp. 312–34 (esp. pp. 327–34), boldly suggests that *Christ II* was composed to join two extant poems, one on Advent, the other on Doomsday.

THE VERCELLI BOOK REVISITED

Peter J. Lucas

Situated in Europe's largest rice-growing area between Milan and Turin, Vercelli is an unusual place to find an Old English manuscript. While the city may have been on one of the routes for pilgrims from the north visiting Rome — the most plausible explanation for the manuscript's presence there, as conjectured by Kenneth Sisam¹ — it is not now a principal tourist destination. Yet, having been assigned the Italian job,² I found that the tourist publicity for visitors to that region features the Vercelli Book as a major attraction, and the prominent notice taken of that book on the city's website reflects, in a way,³ its actual importance for Anglo-Saxonists.

There are many manuscripts containing Old English on the Continent, but Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CXVII is a remarkable manuscript to survive anywhere and is one of only five major manuscripts containing Old English poetry.

¹ Kenneth Sisam, 'Marginalia in the Vercelli Book', in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 109–18. For a resumé of previous scholarship on this topic and for some useful background information, see Maureen Halsall, 'Vercelli and the *Vercelli Book*', *PMLA*, 84 (1969), 1545–50. For further speculation (that the book was brought by an English canon on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Eusebius of Vercelli, patron saint of canons), see Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'Rome, Ruthwell, Vercelli: *The Dream of the Rood* and the Italian Connection', in *Vercelli tra Oriente ed Occidente tra tarda Antichità e Medioevo*, ed. by Vittoria Dolcetti Corazza (Vercelli, 1998), pp. 59–100 (pp. 96–97).

² My descriptions of all the manuscripts in Italy containing Old English will appear in the ASMMF series.

³ This connection might have been more forceful if an image on the city's website that purported to depict the first page of the Vercelli Book actually did so (<<http://www.comune.vercelli.it>>, accessed 2003). The image posted at that time was of the first page of the poem *Beowulf* as recorded in London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A XV.

It is the sole witness for the poetry it comprises, as well as for about half of its homilies. As a manuscript containing Old English and surviving on the Continent it is outstanding. It has been much studied by many distinguished scholars, among them Max Förster, Neil Ker, Donald Scragg, Kenneth and Celia Sisam, and Paul Szarmach.⁴ The first scholar to examine the manuscript in detail was Johann Christian Maier (1791–1835).⁵ In the 1830s, before the invention of photography, German scholars travelled around Europe with their chemical potions designed to make ancient script more legible — potions we now call reagents. In Épinal, Franz Josef Mone (1796–1871) from Karlsruhe applied a reagent to the glossary from Moyénmoutier that gave the leaves a bluish hue, but fortunately it did not render them illegible. In Vercelli, Maier applied another reagent, which he called *Gallaepfeltinktur* ‘gall-nut-tincture’,⁶ which had the effect of staining brown the areas to which it was applied, and some of the writing was obliterated. The first leaf, which contained the beginning of the unique text of a homily for Good Friday on John 18–19 (Vercelli Homily I, ‘Feria .vi. in parasceuen’), is now virtually illegible. Elsewhere the damage is less. Twenty-nine other places are affected (though most are still legible): fols 2^r/24, 25^r/29, 26^r/12–24 (in a streak), 36^v/7–11 (a patch), 37^v/14–16 (a blot), 37^v/21–24 (another blot), 38^r/4–11, 38^r/1–2, 42^v/1–3, 54^r/1–17 (a blot), 54^v/1, 55^r/10, 55^v/20–22 and 24–25, 57^r/1, 65^r/2 and 15 (blots), 67^v/21–22, 75^v/1–6 and 8–24 (i.e. the whole page except for the writing

⁴ The ‘re-’ in the word ‘revisited’ in the title of the present chapter refers to the manuscript’s history rather than to any repetition in my own travel itinerary. See for example, Max Förster, *Die Vercelli-Homilien zum ersten male herausgegeben*, Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Prosa, 12 (Hamburg, 1932); N. R. Ker, ‘C. Maier’s Transcript of the Vercelli Book’, *Medium Ævum*, 19 (1950), 17–25; Donald G. Scragg, ‘The Compilation of the Vercelli Book’, *ASE*, 2 (1973), 189–207, and *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. Scragg, EETS o.s., 300 (London, 1992); Sisam, ‘Marginalia’; Celia Sisam, *The Vercelli Book: A Late Tenth-Century Manuscript Containing Prose and Verse*, *Vercelli Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII*, EEMF, 19 (Copenhagen, 1976); and Paul E. Szarmach, ‘The Scribe of the Vercelli Book’, *Studia Neophilologica*, 51 (1979), 179–88.

⁵ Maier was an assistant for Eduard Schrader’s edition of the *Corpus iuris civilis* (Berlin, 1832). On his transcript of the Vercelli Book, see Ker, ‘C. Maier’s Transcript’, and Maureen Halsall, ‘More about C. Maier’s Transcript of the Vercelli Book’, *English Language Notes*, 8 (1970), 3–6. For further comment on the background to his visit to Vercelli, see Halsall, ‘Benjamin Thorpe and the Vercelli Book’, *English Language Notes*, 6 (1969), 164–69.

⁶ Cited from Maier’s own testimony by Halsall, ‘More about C. Maier’s Transcript’, pp. 4 and 6, repr. in Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 48. Gall-nut, rich in tannins, was also used in making ink. When used as a reagent it would have been clear at the time of application, but the tannins took effect as it dried.

in red), 77^r/4–5 and 10–24 (a streak), 84^r/13–24 (a streak), 86^r/20–24, 86^v/23–24, 103^v/7, 106^v/27–29, 119^r/28–31 (a blot), 120^v/17, 121^r/21, 134^r/24–29 (a blot), 135^r/23–30 (a blot), and 135^v/17–28 (a patch).⁷ Apart from the use of the reagent, Maier's work was good, as he made a transcript of the Vercelli Book, now London, Lincoln's Inn, MS misc. 225, which is to be relied upon for some readings.⁸

Linguistic evidence suggests that the Vercelli Book probably had its origins in the south-east of England. If Ó Carragáin's suggestion that the book was the work of a secular canon is followed,⁹ then Rochester is the most plausible place of origin, as the cathedral there had five secular canons attached to it up to 1080.¹⁰ From a geographical point of view a Kentish origin fits neatly enough with the fact that the book migrated to the Continent: the port of Dover (and gateway to Europe) is but forty-five miles or so from Rochester.¹¹ On fol. 24^v an eleventh-century Italian hand has added in a blank space the following liturgical heading (a paraphrase of Psalm 26. 9), with neums above:

R[esponsio] Adiutor meus esto domine ne derelinquas me deus salutaris meus. V[ersus].

On the basis of this addition and its distinctive form, Kenneth Sisam concluded that the manuscript was already in Italy in the eleventh century, most likely at Vercelli itself.¹² Here it has remained in the Biblioteca Capitolare until the present day. Apparently nothing much happened to it — a good thing for a manuscript — until the nineteenth century.¹³ Early in that century it received its present binding

⁷ For readings now recoverable only from Maier's transcript, see Ker, 'C. Maier's Transcript', pp. 22–25.

⁸ See Ker, 'C. Maier's Transcript', and Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, pp. 51–53.

⁹ Ó Carragáin, 'Rome, Ruthwell, Vercelli', pp. 96–97.

¹⁰ David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, 1971), p. 74, also p. 435.

¹¹ Kentish spellings are listed by Scragg, 'The Compilation', p. 206. See also Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, pp. 32–35.

¹² Sisam, 'Marginalia', pp. 113–16; see further Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 44.

¹³ Ker, 'C. Maier's Transcript', p. 22, notes that the text of the manuscript apparently deteriorated before Maier got to it in 1834. We do not know when leaves now missing were lost. The present cathedral dates from 1572, preserving a Romanesque campanile from an older building, so the books in the library may have suffered various vicissitudes in the course of the rebuilding. However Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 50, considers that damage to the manuscript probably occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century; her supposition that the first leaf was defaced before 1778 rests on the assumption that the reason the anonymous eighteenth-century cataloguer couldn't read it was because of damage to it rather than because it was in Old English. The loss of

of brown calf on medieval boards blind-stamped with a double ornamental border in a pattern found in other Vercelli books in the Biblioteca Capitolare, with membrane pastedown and endleaves. Foliation (from 1 to 136) at the top right-hand corner of each leaf was supplied in ink during the nineteenth century, probably contemporaneously with the binding, and has been supplemented in pencil. Then in 1910–11, following a conference at St Gallen in 1898 at which the prefect of the Vatican Library called for manuscripts in need of conservation to be sent to the Vatican, the Vercelli Book was duly sent there for what turned out to be a heavy *restaurazione*. For example, the last quire (fols 129–35) lacks leaf 8, but fol. 136 has been fused to the first leaf (fol. 129) to form an apparent bifolium. But as noted by Ker, the pattern of wormholes, evident on fol. 135 and going back as far as fol. 123, indicates that fol. 136 once stood back to front and the other way up at the front of the manuscript,¹⁴ and the heading on the verso — ‘CVM PERUENISSE[T]’, probably from Luke 22. 40 and associated with Homily I for Good Friday — being presently upside down, confirms this deduction. Folio 136 was once at the beginning of the volume, perhaps put there for protection, but was possibly originally the last leaf of Quire XVIII, in which case it would have been the other way round, with the hair side outside. There are paste-marks on fol. 135^v, now the penultimate leaf, that suggest it was once next to a previous binding, and these are consistent with fol. 136 having been at the front of the volume at an earlier stage of its history. Evidence from Maier’s notes, and from the difference in colour of the membrane observable now, indicates that in the restoration of 1911 some singleton leaves were fused to form bifolia. There are nine pairs of these leaves, as follows: Quire II, fols 13/16; Quire IV, fols 27/30; Quire V, fols 35/38; Quire VII, fols 50/53; Quire VIII, fols 58/61; Quire IX, fols 66/69; Quire XI, fols 82/84; Quire XIII, fols 94/97; and Quire XVI, fols 113/116. Each pair is the third and sixth leaves of a quire of eight, except that fols 58/61 are the fourth and seventh leaves respectively of an original quire of ten. In Quire XIV, where leaves 3 and 7 are missing, leaf 2 has been fused with 6 to make an apparent bifolium. In Quire XVII the *restaurazione* has probably obscured the original make-up, which shows Quire XVI comprising fols 112–18, lacking leaf 1, and Quire XVII comprising just two singletons,

leaves suggests that the book became damp at the spine, causing the sewing to rot and/or the hinges to disintegrate, but in the aftermath of the *restaurazione* there are now no physical indications that this happened.

¹⁴ N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with a suppl., 1990), p. 463.

fol. 119–20. Nearly all scholars who have studied the manuscript in any detail have done so in the aftermath of the 1911 *restaurazione*.¹⁵

The Vercelli Book was written in the late tenth century by a single scribe, probably over a period of time that included intervals between the different parts of the manuscript. The manuscript was corrected, at least in part, contemporaneously, as indicated, for example, by excision marks suprascript on fol. 14^r/23–24.¹⁶ Excluding endleaves it presently contains 135 + 1 (fol. 136) leaves, but twelve (or eleven) have been lost. More may have been lost at the end. At the bottom of fol. 63^v (the last leaf of Quire VIII) an eleventh-century hand has written *writ þus* ‘write thus’, possibly an instruction to a copyist to carry on from one quire to the next. At the bottom of fol. 135^v, set in a little from the outer edge of the written area, probably the same annotator has written *writ þis* ‘write this’. The words may be an indication that there was once more material after the present end of the manuscript.¹⁷ The quality of the membrane varies from good (as in Quire IV) to moderate, never limp. Some leaves are very yellow and translucent so that the writing on one side shows through on the other, for example, fol. 12–15, Quire VII. There are three distinct booklets, A, B, and C, each beginning a new text, but they were probably not planned in this order. Booklet A comprises Quires I–III containing Vercelli Homilies I–IV. Vercelli Homily IV ends in Quire III on fol. 24^v/14 with lines 15–24 showing no text, and the following leaf, presumably blank, is no longer present. Booklet B, much the largest, comprises Quires IV–XVII containing Vercelli Homilies V–XXII, and in verse, *Andreas*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Soul and Body I*, *Homiletic Fragment I* (sometimes called *Deceit*), and *The Dream of the Rood*. Vercelli Homily XXII ends in Quire XVII on fol. 120^v/17 with lines 18–31 showing no text, but only two singleton leaves of this quire remain. Booklet C comprises Quires XVIII–XIX containing *Elene* in verse and Vercelli Homily XXIII on St Guthlac. This homily ends in Quire XIX on fol. 135^v/28 with the following leaf apparently missing (unless it was fol. 136, which shows no text). Blank space (and/or pages) at the end of a text is one of the indications of a separate manuscript booklet.¹⁸

¹⁵ Halsall, ‘More about C. Maier’s Transcript’, p. 5, approved of the joining of singletons to make bifolia, presumably under the mistaken impression that they were originally bifolia that had become divided.

¹⁶ See Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, pp. 28–30 and 53–58, and cf. Scragg, ‘The Compilation’, p. 204, n. 2.

¹⁷ Booklet C at the end of the manuscript is unlikely to have contained additional text, but that still allows for additional textual material to have followed it.

¹⁸ See Pamela R. Robinson, ‘Self-Contained Units in Composite Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Period’, *ASE*, 7 (1978), 231–38 (pp. 232–33).

By definition a manuscript is handmade. Every manuscript is unique, so there is no such thing as a 'normal' manuscript. But most manuscripts present what may be termed 'regular' features in their make-up. To illustrate this regularity let us briefly consider another manuscript I was invited to examine by Nick Doane. Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 574 (olim 334) is a handsome Bede, carefully planned and executed, written at Cîteaux in the third quarter of the twelfth century. The main part of the manuscript was written on membrane of good quality, creamy and fairly thick, but supple. The leaves, measuring 322 x 234 mm, show a written area of 225–35 x 166 mm disposed in two columns, each one 76 mm wide and containing thirty-six horizontal lines. The collation reads Quires I–XIV⁸ (fols 2–113); it is entirely straightforward. The written area is of a more or less consistent size, with the same number of lines per page and the same width of column throughout, and the quires are all made up of four bifolia, with no singletons. Although most of the work was done by Scribe 1, this regularity encompasses the work of a second scribe, the hallmark of a scriptorium run with care and discipline, where scribes communicated with each other effectively.

The Vercelli Book is not like this. It shows what Donald G. Scragg has called 'disorderly arrangement'.¹⁹ Although written by a single scribe, it contains three distinct booklets. From the table 'The Vercelli Book: Arrangement and Contents' (see the Appendix, pp. 173–74), the variation in the make-up of the quires can be seen. While Booklet C is pretty regular in showing quires of 8 leaves made up entirely of bifolia, Booklets A and B show quires of 6 and 10 amongst a majority of quires of 8, as well as a high proportion of singletons, 23 in all out of 120 surviving leaves, of which all (with the possible exception of fols 119–20) were apparently part of the intended make-up. This is a relatively high proportion of singleton leaves, over 19 per cent of the total, and some five of them (23 per cent) are apparently additions to the basic structure of bifolia (or pairs of singletons), that is, were apparently not envisaged when the quire was prepared for writing. Evidently the scribe was perfectly capable of 'regular' arrangement, as witnessed by Booklet C, which is not in itself disorderly at all, but in the other booklets, and particularly in Booklet B, his arrangement is indeed disorderly.

The irregular way of setting out the area for writing varies to an extent that is even more remarkable, even within booklets (again with the exception of Booklet C). From the table indicating Arrangement and Contents (see the Appendix) the

¹⁹ Scragg, 'An Old English Homilist of Archbishop Dunstan's Day', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 181–92 (p. 189).

variation in the number of lines of writing in each quire can be seen. The background to this is that the scribe consistently provided pricking and ruling for a frame with double vertical frame-lines.²⁰ His use of the pricking-wheel seems at times a little tentative, especially in Booklet A. In Quire I the prick-marks have been made twice, quite close together. The prick-marks appear similarly in Quire II, except that they appear to have been made twice only on fols 14–18, the last leaves of the quire, presumably because the pricking was done from the front and the scribe perhaps did not press hard enough at his first attempt. In Quire III the prick-marks appear similarly except that they appear to have been made twice only for the bottom three horizontal lines on fols 19–24. As for the ruling, although the vertical rules are consistent in extending to the outer edges of the leaves, the horizontal rules show some variation. In Booklet A the horizontal rules extend between the inner vertical frame rules, with the exception of the top rule, which extends outwards to the prick-mark. In Booklet B both the top and bottom horizontal rules extend to the outer edges of the leaves (as is clear on fols 28, 36, 64, 96, 105), but in Quires VIII, XI, XII, and XIV the bottom horizontal line does not extend beyond the vertical frame line. The rules in between all begin and end at the inner vertical rule on both sides of the frame rule, with only occasional overlap into the column between the two outer vertical frame rules. In Booklet C all the horizontal rules occur between the inner vertical frame lines, with occasional overlap into the column between the two outer vertical frame rules. So again, while Booklet C is regular, Booklets A and B are not.

The scribe apparently followed two models for layout, one comprising twenty-four (sometimes twenty-five) lines, and one comprising twenty-nine to thirty-two lines. Some of the lesser variations are readily explicable. In Booklet C, for example, the number of lines in the last quire is one or two higher than in the preceding quire, an indication that the scribe, anticipating completion of the text in hand, increased the number of lines to make sure that the text would really achieve physical completion in that quire. To accommodate the extra line(s) the height of the written area rises from 224 mm to 233 mm, an increase of just 4 per cent. Such practice is quite common, and an example occurs, to look no further, in the *Beowulf* manuscript.²¹ Unlike Booklets A and B there is nothing particularly

²⁰ In Quires XV and XVI a larger format was used, so relatively few prick-marks can now be seen.

²¹ Peter J. Lucas, 'The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 41 (1990), 463–78 (p. 470). For a facsimile, see Kemp Malone, *The Nowell Codex*, EEMF, 12 (Copenhagen, 1963). For a description see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, pp. 279–83, nos 215–16.

'disorderly' about the make-up of Booklet C. Elsewhere in the manuscript by far the most extraordinary change of format occurs in *The Dream of the Rood* at lines 21/22. At the end of fol. 104^v the text reads 'Geseah ic þæt fuse beacen [continuing on fol. 105^r] wendan wædum 7 bleom'. No one has suggested a lacuna here, and it would be absolutely implausible to do so: the passage reads perfectly as part of the very intense vision of the Cross. Yet fol. 104 in Quire XIV shows twenty-four lines per page, while fol. 105 in Quire XV shows thirty-two lines per page, an increase of over 33 per cent.²² This is not the only difference: the width of the lines written in Quire XIV is 140 mm, while in Quire XV it is 158 mm, the widest in the manuscript, and an increase of nearly 13 per cent. Quire XV shows more writing per page than any other in the manuscript. Scribes may sometimes be erratic, but, given the relative regularity of Booklet C, this is a change of practice for which there must be some explanation: it prompts the question 'Why?' As this increase occurs some way ahead of the end of Booklet B, which may originally have been more extended than it is now, it is not very convincing to use anticipation of a problem in fitting the material into the available quire space as an explanation for this change of format. One possible clue here is that on fol. 111^v, the last page of the quire, the last line for writing is left blank and the penultimate line has the writing spaced out so that it fills the whole line. Since the text of Homily XX continues in the next quire, the most obvious explanation of this feature is that the scribe began to copy an exemplar quire by quire at this stage. Work on the texts is relevant here. In his study of Homilies XIX–XXI for Rogation Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, Scragg draws the conclusion that the text of these homilies is so close to the authorial composition that the Vercelli Book scribe may even have been in the same scriptorium as their author.²³ These are the very texts that occur where there is the sudden enlargement of the written area. I suggest that the increased size of the written area was deliberately adopted part of the way through *The Dream of the Rood* in order to accommodate the format of the exemplar of the Rogation Homilies, which the scribe already knew he wanted to copy next. The transition is awkward, and it is compounded by the structure of the quire, where a singleton (fol. 107) has been inserted into a quire of 6.²⁴

²² The number of lines rises to thirty-three on fols 110–11.

²³ Scragg, 'An Old English Homilist', pp. 190–91.

²⁴ A more complicated explanation is proposed by Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 39, whereby the scribe decided to cut out material already copied and then put in *The Dream of the Rood* and Homilies XIX–XXI. Her explanation means that the beginning of *The Dream of the Rood* on fol. 104^v/7–24 was only written after the matter previously following fol. 104 was cast aside. Her

The other point of particular comment is at the beginning of Booklet B. Here the membrane is the best in quality in the manuscript, as if it was intended to stand at the beginning. The format is for twenty-nine lines, which then reduces to twenty-four for the next ten quires (Quire VII shows twenty-five lines). The best explanation again seems to be that the scribe was following a layout of twenty-nine lines in the exemplar of Homily V, but that his exemplar for *Andreas* showed twenty-four lines. The possibility that Booklet B may have been intended to follow on from Booklet C seems to me unlikely. Planning the homogeneity of his book does not seem to have been part of the scribe's repertoire.

Another oddity of the Vercelli Book that deserves comment is its very restricted use of ornament and colour. Decorated initials (or spaces left for them) occur on fols 46^r (space, *Andreas* 1253), 49^r (*Andreas* 1478), and 52^v (space, beginning of *Fates of the Apostles*), and on fols 106^v (beginning of Homily XIX), 109^v (replacement square initial, beginning of Homily XX), and 112^r (beginning of Homily XXI). So decorated initials were allowed for only in Quires VI–VII and XV–XVI. Red ink is used for the heading and the first word of item 13 on fol. 71^r, for the heading and first three letters of the first word of item 14 on fol. 73^v, for the heading and first two words of item 15 on fol. 75^v, for touching the letters 'A' and 'EN' in 'AmEN' and for the heading and first word of the following item 16 on fol. 76^v, and also for capital 'I' in 'Is' on fol. 74^r/18. So red ink occurs only in Quires IX–X.²⁵ This restricted provision for decorated initials and use of colour suggests that the scribe has taken over these features from the exemplar he had before him at the time.

There are then a number of features that indicate that the scribe adapted the structure of the quires and the organization of the written area, while also varying the display features of his texts, according to whatever he felt the most pressing needs to be at any given time, whether they were the need to complete a text within the physical limits of a quire or to conform to the layout and display features of an exemplar. These characteristics are particularly notable in Booklets A and B, which contrast with the relative regularity of Booklet C. The scribe made a collection of texts that were of interest for their contents. While the collection as a whole is

proposition therefore presumes that Quire XIV was previously the end of a booklet. Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'How Did the Vercelli Collector Interpret *The Dream of the Rood*?', in *Studies in English Language and Early Literature in Honour of Paul Christophersen*, ed. by Philip M. Tilling, Occasional Papers in Linguistics and Language Learning, 8 (Belfast, 1981), pp. 79–91, argues strongly that *The Dream of the Rood* was tied in thematically with the preceding verse texts.

²⁵ On fol. 90^r in Quire XII, at the beginning of item 19, yellow-ochre-ish shading is shown in three letters of 'DE PVRFICATIONE' (as is indicated here by bold type).

more than a hotchpotch, and may not be entirely haphazard, it is certainly not well organized; it is not the product of careful planning, and its guiding principle is not transparent.²⁶

Earlier I compared the physical structure of the Vercelli Book with the Cîteaux Bede now at Dijon. Similarly one can also compare the arrangement of its contents with that of another manuscript: CCCC, MS 162,²⁷ yet another manuscript I was invited to describe by Nick Doane. CCCC 162 is a handsome, large collection of homilies, evidently a careful and thoughtful compilation, and it is particularly rich in items for the period leading up to Easter. It was written at the beginning of the eleventh century by a single 'thinking' scribe who, like the Vercelli Book scribe, was probably based in the south-east (Rochester or Canterbury), and who made minute adjustments as he wrote,²⁸ as well as inserting corrections. Like the Vercelli Book, the manuscript falls into three booklets written by a single scribe:²⁹ Booklet A (Quires I–VII), comprising seven homilies for general occasions; Booklet B (Quires VIII–IX), comprising two homilies for Sundays after Epiphany; and Booklet C (Quires X–XXXV), comprising forty-three homilies for Sundays and Holy Days from Septuagesima to Advent. Whereas in CCCC 162 all the contents are homilies, liturgically arranged, in the Vercelli Book homilies are mixed with poetry,³⁰ and there is no perceptible liturgical arrangement. On the contrary some liturgical occasions are treated twice, for example Epiphany (items 10–11 and 18) and the Rogation Days (items 12–16 and 24–26). Liturgical order is not followed: Good Friday in item 1 comes before the 1st/2nd Sunday in Lent in item 3; Candlemas (2 Feb.) in item 19 is immediately followed by Martinmas (11 Nov.) in item 20; the first set of homilies for the Rogation Days (items 14–16) is

²⁶ I find no justification for the statement by Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, that 'the Vercelli Book was planned' (p. 37).

²⁷ This comparison is suggested in passing by Scragg, 'An Old English Homilist', p. 189.

²⁸ Cf. Donald G. Scragg, 'The Significance of the Vercelli Book among Anglo-Saxon Vernacular Writings', in *Vercelli tra Oriente ed Occidente*, ed. by Corazza, pp. 35–43.

²⁹ Another manuscript comprising three booklets written by a single scribe is Exeter, Cathedral Library, MS 3501 (the Exeter Book). For an analysis, see Patrick Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History, 4 (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 110–47.

³⁰ The distinction between prose and verse was perhaps less absolute for the Anglo-Saxons. All the texts of the Vercelli Book are religious in orientation, whether homiletic, hagiographic, or inspirational.

preceded by another homily for Rogation Tuesday (item 13).³¹ And there is a certain amount of textual repetition, as where Homily XXI is based on an earlier version of Homily II.³²

Several scholars have written on the compilation of the Vercelli Book, notably Donald Scragg, Celia Sisam, and Paul Szarmach.³³ Scragg, drawing particular attention to a lack of linguistic homogeneity amongst the texts, divided the manuscript into groups of texts that may have been discrete in an earlier phase of transmission. His divisions have the merit of following the codicological structure of the manuscript, so that his Groups A, B, and C correspond to Booklets A, B, and C. Only his Group B is subdivided, as is summarized below:³⁴

- 1a Homily V
- 1b *Andreas* and *The Fates of the Apostles*
- 2a Homilies VI–X
- 2b Homilies XI–XIV
- 3 Homilies XV–XVIII
- 4a *Soul and Body I*, *Homiletic Fragment I*, and *The Dream of the Rood*
- 4b Homilies XIX–XXI
- 4c Homily XXII

Group 1b contains distinctive provision for decorated initials. Apart from questions of content, Group 2a is suggested by the numbering in the manuscript of Homilies VII–X as ‘ii’–‘v’, and this set of texts is drawn from a south-eastern homiliary of the second half of the tenth century. Group 2b is suggested by the rubrics ‘Spel to forman gangdæge’, ‘spel to ðam oðrum gangdæge’, and ‘spel to briddan gangdæge’, and Charles D. Wright has argued that Homilies XI–XIII were written (or adapted) with secular clergy in mind.³⁵ Group 3 derives from a Mercian

³¹ Homily X is extant in a number of manuscripts; for discussion, see Jonathan Wilcox, ‘Variant Texts of an Old English Homily: Vercelli X and Stylistic Readers’, in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and J. T. Rosenthal, Studies in Medieval Culture, 40 (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 335–51.

³² Scragg, ‘An Old English Homilist’, p. 191.

³³ Scragg, ‘The Compilation’; Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 40; and Szarmach, ‘The Scribe of the Vercelli Book’, pp. 184–87.

³⁴ Scragg’s Group B, ‘The Compilation’, p. 195.

³⁵ Charles D. Wright, ‘Vercelli Homilies XI–XIII and the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform: Tailored Sources and Implied Audiences’, in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Carolyn Muessig, New History of the Sermon, 3 (Leiden, 2002), pp. 203–27 (pp. 212–24).

homiliary of unknown date. And Group 4b, which shows distinctive provision for decorated initials, is drawn on a late West Saxon collection.³⁶ This kind of analysis of how the texts in the manuscript were compiled shows that they are drawn, probably in groups, from a variety of sources and presumably from a number of exemplars. Moreover, just as the scribe took over aspects of layout and display, he also preserved linguistic features that he found in his exemplars. Other commentators have remarked on the scribe as a faithful copyist.³⁷

I have written this article having studied the manuscript at first hand, making my own observations, and then subsequently reading and in some cases rereading the scholarship relating to it. Everything conspires to suggest that the Vercelli Book is an eclectic collection of texts put together over a period of time by a scribe who, while capable of regular quire structure (as in Booklet C), elsewhere made no attempt to impose order or organization on what he copied. It is an unusual manuscript in terms of its make-up, one that repays careful study of that make-up in relation to its contents (which are invaluable). By considering both together in the light of each other, I hope I have succeeded not only in confirming much that is already known, but also in drawing attention to the physical peculiarities of the manuscript, thereby revealing a little more about its possible gestation and formation.

³⁶ Scragg, 'The Compilation', pp. 195, 205. For the latter group Scragg has refined his views in his later article 'An Old English Homilist'.

³⁷ E.g., Sisam, *The Vercelli Book*, p. 44.

Appendix

The Vercelli Book: Arrangement and Contents

<i>Quire</i>	<i>Folios</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Lineation</i>	<i>Lines per page</i>
Booklet A				
I ⁸⁺¹ (fol. 4 singleton)	1–9	1. Homily I (Good Friday)	1 ^r –9 ^r /24	24
II ⁸⁺¹ (fols. 11, 13, 16 singletons)	10–18	2. Homily II (Judgement Day)	9 ^v /1–12 ^r /24	24
		3. Homily III (1st/2nd Sunday in Lent)	12 ^v /1–16 ^r /18	
III ⁶⁺¹ (fol. 21 singleton; lacks 6 after fol. 24)	19–24	4. Homily IV (Penitential/Judgement Day)	16 ^v /1–24 ^v /14	24
Booklet B				
IV ⁸ (fols 27, 30 singletons)	25–32	5. Homily V (Nativity)	25 ^r /1–29 ^r /10	29
V ⁸ (fols 35, 38 singletons)	33–40	6. <i>Andreas</i> <i>Andreas</i> (cont.)	29 ^v /1–32 ^v /29 33 ^r /1–40 ^r /24	24
VI ⁸ (lacks 3 after fol. 42)	41–47	<i>Andreas</i> (cont.)	41 ^r /1–47 ^v /24	24
VII ⁸ (fols 50, 53 singletons)	48–55	<i>Andreas</i> (cont.) 7. <i>Fates of the Apostles</i>	48 ^r /1–52 ^v /9 52 ^v /11–54 ^r /19	25
		8. Homily VI (Christmas)	54 ^v /1–55 ^v /25	
VIII ¹⁰ (fols 58, 61 singletons; lacks 1 before fol. 56; lacks 10 after fol. 63)	56–63	Homily VI (cont.) 9. Homily VII (Against Idleness)	56 ^r /1–23 56 ^r /1–59 ^r /1	24
		10. Homily VIII (1st Sunday after Epiphany)	59 ^r /3–61 ^r /12	
		11. Homily IX (2nd Sunday after Epiphany)	61 ^r /14–63 ^v /24	
IX ⁸ (fols 66, 69 singletons)	64–71	Homily IX (cont. after lacuna) 12. Homily X (Rogation Tuesday)	64 ^r /1–65 ^r /17 65 ^r /20–71 ^r /10	24
		13. Homily XI (Rogation Monday)	71 ^v /1–24	
X ⁸⁺¹ (fol. 73 singleton; lacks 5 after fol. 75)	72–79	Homily XI (cont.) 14. Homily XII (Rogation Tuesday)	72 ^r /1–73 ^v /15 73 ^v /16–75 ^v /6	24
		15. Homily XIII (Rogation Wednesday)	75 ^v /7–76 ^v /8	
		16. Homily XIV (Rogationtide?)	76 ^v /9–79 ^v /24	

<i>Quire</i>	<i>Folios</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Lineation</i>	<i>Lines per page</i>
XI ⁸ (fols 82, 84 singletons; lacks 6 prob. a singleton after fol. 83; lacks 8 after fol. 85)	80–85	Homily XIV (cont.)	80 ^r /1–80 ^v /6	24
		17. Homily XV (Judgement Day)	80 ^v /8–85 ^v /6	
		18. Homily XVI (Epiphany)	85 ^v /8–24	
XII ⁶	86–91	Homily XVI (cont. after lacuna)	86 ^r /1–90 ^v /20	24
		19. Homily XVII (Candlemas)	90 ^v /22–91 ^v /24	
XIII ⁸ (fols 94, 97 singletons; lacks 7 after fol. 97)	92–98	Homily XVII (cont.)	92 ^r /1–94 ^r /22	24
		20. Homily XVIII (Martinmas)	94 ^r /24–98 ^v /24	
XIV ⁸ (lacks 3 after fol. 100; lacks 7 after fol. 103)	99–104	Homily XVIII (cont.)	99 ^r /1–101 ^r /17	24
		21. <i>Soul and Body I</i> (incomplete at end)	101 ^v /1–103 ^v /24	
		22. <i>Homiletic Fragment I (Deceit)</i>	104 ^r /1–104 ^v /5	
		23. <i>Dream of the Rood</i>	104 ^v /7–24	
XV ⁶⁺¹ (fol. 107 singleton)	105–11	<i>Dream of the Rood</i> (cont.)	105 ^r /1–106 ^r /32	32/33
		24. Homily XIX (Rogation Monday)	106 ^r /1–109 ^v /9	
		25. Homily XX (Rogation Tuesday)	109 ^v /12–111 ^v /32	
XVI ⁸ (fols. 113, 116 singletons; lacks 1 before fol. 112)	112–18	Homily XX (cont. after lacuna)	112 ^r /1–9	31
		26. Homily XXI (Rogation Wednesday)	112 ^r /12–116 ^v /18	
		27. Homily XXII (Last Things)	116 ^v /20–118 ^v /31	
XVII ¹⁺¹ (both singletons)	119–20	Homily XXII (cont.)	119 ^v /1–120 ^v /17	31
Booklet C				
XVIII ⁸	121–28	28. <i>Elene</i>	121 ^r /1–128 ^v /30	30
XIX ⁸ (lacks 8 after fol. 135 unless fol. 136 was it)	129–35	<i>Elene</i> (cont.)	129 ^r /1–133 ^v /6	31/32
		29. Homily XXIII (St Guthlac)	133 ^v /8–135 ^v /28	

THE CANTERBURY PSALTER, CHRIST CHURCH, AND THE LAST OLD ENGLISH PSALTER GLOSS

Matthew T. Hussey

In Anglo-Saxon religious and literary culture, few texts were as crucial as the psalms. Monks memorized them, used them to learn Latin, chanted them in the liturgy, and studied them for their historical and allegorical meanings.¹ The importance of the psalter in Anglo-Saxon literary culture is attested by the number of copies that were in circulation in England during the period extending from the eighth through the twelfth centuries, for over forty complete or fragmentary manuscripts of the various texts of the psalter survive from that time.² Although these manuscripts pertained to centres located throughout Anglo-Saxon England, there is a concentration of them from the two foundations at Canterbury: Christ Church and St Augustine's. It is unsurprising, of course, that the centre of the Church in England was a locus of psalter manuscript production with a rich legacy of scholarly and liturgical use, beginning at least as early as the eighth century (note the deluxe Vespasian Psalter, London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian A I)

¹ See George Hardin Brown, 'The Dynamics of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 77 (1995), 109–42. See also the overview of psalter manuscripts, their use, and their glossing in Mechthild Gretsch's very useful chapter in *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 25 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 6–41.

² Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tübingen, 2001), gives forty-two manuscripts or manuscript fragments, and this count does not include the twelfth-century manuscripts, such as Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8864, discussed below.

and persisting at least to the end of the twelfth century, when the latest extant psalter bearing linguistically recognizable Old English was written.

In this long tradition, one can see a cultural history of sorts in the development and use of the psalter in Canterbury. The psalters produced there trace a specific history of influence, adaptation, and evolution. Christ Church, in particular, produced numerous psalters designed for different forms of study and exegesis. A few of them were glossed in Old English. Some were illustrated, thus highlighting typological and historical details. These two practices intersect in several Christ Church manuscripts where the text and images of the Utrecht Psalter, an elegant and beautiful manuscript that dates from the Carolingian age, were combined with glossing in both Latin and the vernacular.

Before the turn of the millennium, the Utrecht Psalter (which was written in Hautvillers, near Reims, between 820 and 835) had come to Canterbury.³ This book was the basis of a series of copies written in Canterbury over the next two centuries. The Harley Psalter (London, British Library, MS Harley 603), of the early eleventh century, was one of these.⁴ In the twelfth century, a marvellous innovation of textual technology based on the Utrecht Psalter tradition was produced: this was the Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1), which integrated Latin commentary and the living practice of Old English psalter glossing (and much more).⁵ The dynamic history that is evident in these three manuscripts reached its endpoint in a fourth manuscript, a copy of the Eadwine Psalter dating from the late twelfth century, the so-called Canterbury Psalter (also known as the Paris Psalter, especially among art historians) (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846). The Canterbury Psalter represents some exciting innovations in its

³ For recent accounts of the Utrecht Psalter's date and origin, see Koert van der Horst, 'The Utrecht Psalter: Picturing the Psalms of David', in *The Utrecht Psalter in Medieval Art: Picturing the Psalms of David*, ed. by K. van der Horst, William Noel, and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld (Tuurdijk, 1996), pp. 22–84 (pp. 22–23); Kathleen Corrigan, 'Early Medieval Psalter Illustration in Byzantium and the West', in *ibid.*, pp. 85–103 (p. 85); and Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, William Noel, and K. van der Horst, 'Catalogue', in *ibid.*, pp. 168–255 (no. 1, pp. 168–70).

⁴ See William Noel, *The Harley Psalter* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁵ For a facsimile of the Eadwine Psalter, see Phillip Pulsiano and A. N. Doane, 'Cambridge, Trinity College R.17.1', in Peter J. Lucas and Jonathan Wilcox, *Manuscripts Relating to Dunstan, Ælfric and Wulfstan; the 'Eadwine Psalter' Group*, ASMMF, 16 (Tempe, 2008), no. 85, and M. R. James, *The Canterbury Psalter* (London, 1935). On the Eadwine Psalter, see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with a suppl., 1990), no. 91, and *The Eadwine Psalter: Text, Image and Monastic Culture in Twelfth-Century Canterbury*, ed. by Margaret Gibson, T. A. Heslop, and Richard W. Pfaff (London, 1992).

illumination and illustration, and yet in many ways the manuscript is almost a mechanical reproduction of the Eadwine Psalter, with one exception: it is shorn of its Old English gloss, which survives in no more than tiny residual fragments.⁶ The vestigial survival of Old English in the Canterbury Psalter is a counterpoint to that manuscript's bold developments in representational art, and this dynamic is illuminating. By examining the Canterbury Psalter in some detail, one can gain a clearer sense of the changes affecting Canterbury's two major foundations, not to mention England itself, during the period following the Conquest.

The Utrecht Psalter and its Canterbury Adaptations

The Utrecht Psalter, to begin with, is a beautiful expression of the Carolingian *renovatio* of the ninth century. In it we see a powerful instance of what A. N. Doane has called the 'tectonic meeting of old and new'.⁷ The illustrations are a vivacious and revolutionary new presentation of line, figure, and form, and yet, as has been argued by several art historians, this style may derive from classical or late antique models.⁸ Furthermore, the Utrecht Psalter uses a hierarchy of scripts that deliberately evokes the past. Rather than employing the newly evolved and widespread Carolingian minuscule that had come to dominate manuscript production in Western Europe by the ninth century, the Utrecht Psalter uses Roman rustic capitals as its main script. This is a script that looks back to Latin Antiquity; when studying it, one may be reminded of deluxe poetic Virgil manuscripts in rustic capitals, such as Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MSS Vat. lat. 3867 and 3225. Uncial script — itself a retrospective form of writing by the ninth century — is used for the psalms' headings. Thus between the use of rustic and uncial letters, the Utrecht Psalter glances back in time, and in so doing confers age

⁶ See N. R. Ker, 'A Supplement to the *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*', *ASE*, 5 (1976), 121–31, suppl. no. 419; for a facsimile, see Phillip Pulsiano and Matthew T. Hussey, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 8846', in Lucas and Wilcox, *Manuscripts Relating*, no. 432. The Old English glosses are printed by Henry Hargreaves and Cecily Clark, 'An Unpublished Old English Psalter-Gloss Fragment', *Notes and Queries*, 12 (1965), 443–46, and by M. J. Toswell, 'A Further Old English Gloss in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS 8864', *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1994), 10–11.

⁷ A. N. Doane, oral communication, Madison, WI, 29 April 2005.

⁸ See Corrigan, 'Early Medieval Psalter Illustration', and Florentine Mutherich, 'Carolingian Manuscript Illumination in Rheims', in *The Utrecht Psalter*, ed. by van der Horst, Noel, and Wüstefeld, pp. 85–103 and 104–19.

and authority on this book production as a counterpoint to the proto-humanist modernity of its illustrations. This retrospectivity or artificial archaism, undertaken in conjunction with radical innovation, is a powerful aesthetic mode that persists in the several copies of the Utrecht Psalter from Anglo-Saxon England, manuscripts that are records of the meeting of old and new.

The dynamic encounter of old and new can be seen, likewise, in Christ Church's adaptation of the Utrecht Psalter in the Harley Psalter. This manuscript follows the illustrations in its source carefully, but renders them in colour with some development of detail and style.⁹ The manuscript is likely to have been a high-status commission designed to reflect the prestige and skill (not to mention the piety and devotion) of the Christ Church community, members of whom must have been inspired by the innovation and virtuoso accomplishment of the Carolingian masterpiece. However, while keeping to the three-column format of the Utrecht Psalter, the Harley Psalter alters the hierarchy of scripts. Rustic capitals are used for the headings of the psalms, while the main text is in Anglo-Caroline minuscule, a style that had come to the forefront of Anglo-Saxon manuscript production beginning in the mid-tenth century.¹⁰ The development of the illustrations and the update of the scripts represent a modernizing aesthetic, and yet the Harley Psalter makes a retrospective move as well. By the tenth century, and even as early as the ninth, the Gallican text of the psalms was displacing the Roman text throughout Europe. It had started to gain traction in England in the wake of the Benedictine reforms there, which began in the mid-tenth century. However, the Harley Psalter replaces the Utrecht Psalter's Gallican text of the psalms with the Roman text,¹¹ which had been preferred in England for centuries.¹² In a sense, this is a nativist and deliberately archaic element in the Harley Psalter's adaptation of its source.

⁹ For an account of the making of the manuscript and a detailed description, see Noel, *The Harley Psalter*, pp. 9–27.

¹⁰ For this history, see T. A. M. Bishop, *English Caroline Minuscule* (Oxford, 1971) and David Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History: Studies in Benedictinism, 950–1030* (Woodbridge, 1993). More recently, Malcolm B. Parkes notes the authority of the Caroline minuscule in tenth- and eleventh-century England in *Their Hands before Our Eyes: The Lyell Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford, 1999* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 130–32.

¹¹ The Harley Psalter is mainly a Roman text, but Psalms 100 to 105. 25 are Gallican.

¹² For an overview of this development, see Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 21–25 and 287–96.

The Paris Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8824) participates loosely in the Utrecht tradition as well.¹³ The manuscript — in an unusual tall and narrow format — is bilingual, containing a Roman text of the psalms in an Anglo-Caroline minuscule and an Old English translation in a vernacular minuscule; these hands date to the mid-eleventh century. The first fifty psalms are accompanied by an Old English prose translation generally attributed to King Alfred and his circle, while the remaining psalms have been translated into Old English metrical verse. There are thirteen illustrations extant (many leaves are missing) that show the influence of the Utrecht Psalter, and a strong case has been made for the codex's Canterbury origin.¹⁴ As such, the Paris Psalter embodies the first extant bilingualism in the Utrecht tradition at Canterbury. The manuscript looks back to the Roman text, King Alfred's translation, and the Utrecht illustrations in an innovative composite of parallel texts and illustrations. It is not in the direct line of Utrecht copies, but it is an interesting exponent.

The dynamics of renovation and reproduction expressed in the Harley Psalter (and to a lesser extent the Paris Psalter) become impressively more complex and powerful in the making of the Eadwine Psalter. This justly admired manuscript was produced at Christ Church over a century later (between 1155 and 1160). The manuscript shows significant developments in design, format, layout, and illumination.¹⁵ Its codicological and artistic intricacies, its history, and its cultural potency have been the subject of intensive study, and the present study will not attempt to deal with this complicated artefact in all its details. However, several important features of the book are worth noting, for they link it to the Utrecht tradition and the ongoing tendencies of retrospection and prospection in Christ Church book production. The Eadwine Psalter takes up the three-column format of the Utrecht Psalter with significant additions. The two inner columns, near the book's gutter, are in a script about half the size of that of the main column of text. This main column is flanked by two smaller columns that are written in a significantly smaller script. The main column consists of the Gallican text of the psalms with a Latin interlinear gloss; the two narrower columns consist of Latin commentary. The two

¹³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 367. For a facsimile, see *The Paris Psalter*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave, EEMF, 8 (Copenhagen, 1958).

¹⁴ Richard Emms, 'The Scribe of the Paris Psalter', *ASE*, 28 (1999), 179–83.

¹⁵ On the general dating, see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 91. See also Teresa Webber, 'The Script', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 13–24 (p. 24), and Gibson, 'Conclusions: The Eadwine Psalter in Context', in *ibid.*, pp. 209–13 (p. 210), as well as Pulsiano and Doane, 'Cambridge, Trinity College R.17.1', no. 91.

central columns consist of (a) the Hebraic text of the psalms with an Anglo-Norman French interlinear gloss, and (b) the Roman text of the psalms with an Old English interlinear gloss. Each triplex psalm (three texts, Latin glosses and commentary, Old English gloss, Anglo-Norman gloss) is preceded and followed by a Latin collect written in a three-column format different from the columns of psalm texts. Each psalm is preceded by an elaborate multicoloured illustration based on the illustrations in the Utrecht Psalter, though significantly updated in style. The text of each psalm begins with a lavish illuminated initial. The manuscript is a marvel of scholarship, artistry, care, and expense.

Margaret Gibson has called this manuscript ‘a monument to a comprehensive conservatism’.¹⁶ While the manuscript witnesses significant innovations and developments, including its multifaceted layout, historiated initials, several registers of script, trilingualism, and adaptation of the Utrecht illustrations, it also — as Gibson eloquently reminds us — is a ‘monument’ that conserves elements of the past. Her term evokes the commemorative work of the artefact and thus calls attention to the difficulties in the ways that this book demands theorization. The term calls to mind that kind of historical retrospection that collects and conserves scholarship, artistic tradition, and scribal skill. After all, the Eadwine Psalter is named after the ‘prince of scribes’ Eadwine, who is himself memorialized in the famous portrait on fol. 283^v, framed by the verses that declaim his fame.¹⁷ And yet, a monument does powerful ideological work in the present for the future; undoubtedly, the Eadwine Psalter was designed and made not only for the enduring glory of God and the persistent ‘fama’ of Eadwine, but for its specific human and historical moment.

The Eadwine Psalter, as a creative, political, and ideological act, may have emerged in the waning years of the archiepiscopacy of Theobald. As archbishop, Theobald had several heated conflicts with the monks at Christ Church, but during the period when the Eadwine Psalter was likely written, Theobald had for the most part become ineffective, sick, and frail. In his career, Theobald had concentrated on renovating the archiepiscopal household, not to mention being preoccupied with national matters and his conflict with King Stephen. During the earlier part of his career, while Theobald developed the archiepiscopacy, the monastic

¹⁶ Gibson, ‘Conclusions’, p. 213.

¹⁷ George Zarnecki, ‘The Eadwine Portrait’, in *Études d’art médiéval offertes à Louis Grodecki*, ed. by Sumner McKnight Crosby and others (Paris, 1981), pp. 93–98; T. A. Heslop, ‘Eadwine and His Portrait’, in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 178–85, calls the portrait ‘restrospective’ (p. 185). M. T. Clanchy calls the portrait an ‘epitaph’ in ‘Documenting the Self: Abelard and the Individual in History’, *Historical Research*, 76 (2003), 293–309 (p. 297).

community persisted from *c.* 1125 to 1150 'unchanged'.¹⁸ However, during roughly the same period, Wibert, prior from 1152/53 to 1167, acted dynamically and powerfully in the Christ Church community; and like the Christ Church community itself, he was competitive and self-absorbed. He embarked on an ambitious programme of restoration and renovation of the cathedral and its buildings. He repeatedly defended the established traditions, rights, and customs of the Christ Church community, and he was heavily invested not only in the architectural, but also in the scholarly traditions of the foundation. Wibert is the most likely patron of the Eadwine Psalter.¹⁹ He also led the way in the building of the octagonal water tower which supplied running water to the cathedral and monastic buildings. Illustrated leaves depicting the waterworks were added to the Eadwine Psalter, and the water tower is featured there prominently.²⁰ The manuscript apparently reflects the programme of renovation and conservation that Wibert undertook during his years as prior.

While the manuscript was probably written between 1155 and 1160 under Theobald and Wibert, the waterworks drawing, the Eadwine portrait, and some prognostic texts were appended later, perhaps *c.* 1165–70,²¹ though it is not unlikely that these drawings and texts could have been added in the 1170s.²² The later additions to the Eadwine Psalter suggest that the book remained a dynamic ideological instrument in Canterbury. The manuscript may have been reinvoked as a witness and claim to Christ Church's wealth, prestige, and status, much as it reflects a commemorative and conservative achievement in textual technology, art, and scholarship. There are several political crises at which such a book might have served a purpose during the late 1160s and 1170s. Perhaps the most likely of these

¹⁸ Margaret Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins, 1070–1220', in *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, ed. by Patrick Collinson, Nigel Ramsay, and Margaret Sparks (Oxford, 1995), pp. 38–68 (p. 57).

¹⁹ Gibson, 'Conclusions', p. 211, and 'Normans and Angevins', p. 60.

²⁰ Heslop, 'Eadwine and his Portrait', p. 180; Francis Woodman, 'The Water Works Drawings', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 168–77 (p. 175); William Urry, 'Canterbury Kent, *circa* 1153 x 1161', in *Local Maps and Plans from Medieval England*, ed. by R. A. Skelton and P. D. A. Harvey (Oxford, 1986), pp. 43–58 (p. 50).

²¹ Gibson, 'Conclusions', p. 209.

²² Heslop, 'Eadwine and his Portrait', pp. 179–80, suggests that the Eadwine portrait may date to around 1170, based in part on the stylistic analyses of Zarnecki, 'The Eadwine Portrait'. In reference to the waterworks drawing, Heslop suggests that 'the portrait could be a decade or two later than the main part of the book' (p. 180).

was the contest over the selection of the archbishop; the monks at Christ Church were granted that right in 1158, but rarely was that right respected. Upon the death of Thomas Becket in 1170, the King's initial preferences for archbishop failed. By then, the Christ Church monks wanted Odo of Kent elected, while the King and bishops chose Richard of Dover. The wrangling over the archbishop's seat went on after Henry II's rebellious son and the monks at Christ Church made an appeal to Rome. However, in 1174, Richard of Dover succeeded Thomas Becket. In the same years, the dispute with St Augustine's over that community's exemption from obedience to the archbishop continued the rivalry between the two foundations.²³ In either of these contests, but especially the former, it is possible that the monumental Eadwine Psalter may have worked as a reminder of Christ Church's seniority and primacy.²⁴

The tectonic meeting of old and new found in the Eadwine Psalter — its conservative inclusion of three texts of the psalter; its use of both the newly arrived Anglo-Norman French and the deep-rooted Old English in the glosses; its rich renditions of the old Utrecht Psalter illustrations in a new style — lent the book its symbolic potency as a testament to Christ Church's heritage and predominance. The second quarter of the twelfth century was a time of change for the community, but these years were relatively calm compared to the upheavals of the second half of the century.²⁵ Besides Becket's martyrdom in 1170, the great fire of 1174 and the struggles with the archbishops and their households wrought great physical and institutional changes at Christ Church between 1170 and 1200. Remarkably, a manuscript in part reflecting what might be called stasis comes from these years.

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846 replicates the Eadwine Psalter to an astounding degree for a handmade object. Generally, the leaves of the Canterbury Psalter are slightly bigger, measuring 484 x 315 mm with a written space of about 303 x 295 mm; the Eadwine Psalter measures about 455 x 326 mm, with a written space of about 320 x 300 mm. The two books are laid out the same, with the same

²³ Charles Duggan, 'Richard (d. 1184)', in *DNB* [accessed 17 December 2008].

²⁴ Charles Burnett, 'Prognostications of the Eadwine Psalter', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 165–67 (pp. 165–66), suggests that the prognostic texts added roughly at the same time as the waterworks drawing and the Eadwine portrait are concerned with 'ecclesiastical promotion'. Katherine S. Baker, 'The Appended Images of the Eadwine Psalter: A New Appraisal of their Commemorative, Documentary and Institutional Functions' (unpublished master's thesis, Emory University, 2008), seeks to date the appended images into the 1170s and shows their relevance to the Christ Church's community's struggles in that decade.

²⁵ Succinctly traced by Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', pp. 55–68.

number of lines per page and with the same patterns of pricking and ruling (two rows of pricking in each margin; the outer row has eighteen holes and the inner row has thirty-six). The leaves are foliated identically. The texts of the psalms almost always have the exact same number of words per line and are spaced almost identically. The marginal and interlinear glosses are almost exactly the same in the two books. An exception to the similarities in the two books is that the corrections and additions in the Eadwine Psalter are worked into the copy in the Canterbury Psalter. The main scribe of the Canterbury Psalter even imitates some stylized and elongated letters found in the Eadwine Psalter.²⁶ In terms of textual layout, codicological design, and hierarchy of scripts, the Canterbury Psalter appears to be an almost mechanical reproduction of the Eadwine Psalter. Rather than participating in a dynamic development of recollection and renovation as seen in the prior genealogy of psalters from Christ Church, the Canterbury Psalter in these respects presents a facsimile of sorts, static and still.

While much of the Canterbury Psalter is a replication of the Eadwine Psalter, there are a few significant changes, most apparently as regards to the illustrations and illuminated initial capitals. As described by C. R. Dodwell, late Romanesque and early Gothic illumination in England, especially in Winchester, London, and Canterbury, evolved under numerous international influences, especially Byzantine, as seen in works such as the Dover Bible (CCCC, MSS 3 and 4, dated c. 1150, from Christ Church, Canterbury) and the Lambeth Bible (London, Lambeth Palace, MS 3 plus Maidstone Museum, MS s.n., dated c. 1140–50, from St Augustine's, Canterbury).²⁷ These influences can be traced in the Eadwine and Paris Psalters as well. In the Canterbury Psalter, the iconography and modelling of the figures clearly manifests Byzantine traits.²⁸ The decorated initials show recent

²⁶ On the similarities of the two manuscripts, see Patricia Stirnemann, 'Paris, BN, MS lat. 8846 and the Eadwine Psalter', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 186–92 (p. 187), and C. R. Dodwell, 'The Final Copy of the Utrecht Psalter and its Relationship with the Utrecht and Eadwine Psalters', *Scriptorium*, 44 (1990), 21–53. For codicological details, see Pulsiano and Doane, 'Cambridge, Trinity College R.17.1', and Pulsiano and Hussey, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 8846', nos 91 and 432, respectively.

²⁷ C. R. Dodwell, *The Canterbury School of Illumination 1066–1200* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 81–113. My account of the development of illumination in these decades depends on Dodwell throughout; see also Wilhelmina C. M. Wüstefeld, with William Noel and Koert van der Horst, 'Paris Psalter', in *The Utrecht Psalter*, ed. by van der Horst, Noel, and Wüstefeld, pp. 168–255 (pp. 240–41), and William Noel, 'The Utrecht Psalter in England: Continuity and Experiment', in *The Utrecht Psalter*, ed. by van der Horst, Noel, and Wüstefeld, pp. 120–65.

²⁸ Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, at n. 28.

French influence, as well, perhaps driven by the arrival of deluxe French books in Canterbury, such as those imported by Thomas Becket before 1170 and by Becket's good friend Herbert of Bosham after 1173 (but perhaps as late as 1184).²⁹ Furthermore, the design of the illustrations flattens and subdivides the visual field, thereby suggesting the transition in style from Romanesque to Gothic.³⁰ In some of the Canterbury Psalter's illustrations, the artist's 'preference for divisions by rigid horizontal and vertical bar frames' results in diagrammatic and subdivided panels, originally suggested by the landscape lines of the Eadwine illustrations; this compositional style looks ahead to developments in Gothic art and architecture.³¹ Despite the close replication of the Eadwine Psalter's script, design, layout, and codicological form, the illuminations reveal an evolving internationalism with tremendous development of — and even a break from — the Utrecht Psalter tradition particularly, and Christ Church artistic styles more generally.

Glossing the Psalter at Christ Church, Canterbury

This break with Christ Church tradition is witnessed even more clearly in the Canterbury Psalter's treatment of the two sets of vernacular glosses. The Eadwine Psalter's Anglo-Norman gloss to the Hebraic Latin text of the psalms is almost complete, as only a translation of Psalms 125–30 and 149–50 is lacking. This gloss is unlikely to have been composed especially for that book, but it is carefully entered in the interlinear space above the Latin words it translates, and the French text has been frequently corrected.³² The gloss is one of only two extant Anglo-Norman renditions of the Hebraic text, the other being in the Canterbury Psalter. While the Anglo-Norman gloss in the Eadwine Psalter represents a competent and useful translation of the Hebraic text, it would not have been particularly useful,

²⁹ Nigel Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts [I], 1190–1250*, vol. IV of *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*, gen. ed. J. J. G. Alexander (Oxford, 1982), p. 48, describes French influence in the Canterbury Psalter and the possibility of Herbert of Bosham's manuscripts lying behind that influence. This is noted by Stirnemann, 'Paris, BN, MS lat. 8856', p. 190 and n. 18. Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, pp. 102–07, gives a more detailed account.

³⁰ Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, pp. 98 and 103.

³¹ Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, p. 48. See also Stirnemann, 'Paris, BN, MS lat. 8846', p. 191.

³² Dominique Markey, 'The Anglo-Norman Version', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 139–56 (p. 143).

seeing that the dominant text of the psalms in the West was the Gallican (and, to a lesser extent, the Roman in England).³³ Nonetheless, the Canterbury Psalter conserves the Anglo-Norman gloss, but with notable updates, corrections, and improvements that reflect the 'fluid state' of Anglo-Norman French during this period.³⁴

The dynamic quality of the Anglo-Norman glosses in these two manuscripts differs significantly from the static quality of the Old English gloss. The genesis of the Old English gloss in the Eadwine Psalter is, at the very least, difficult to understand fully. For a long time, the Old English gloss in the Eadwine Psalter was seen as problematically cobbled together from varied sources; however, recent studies have shown that the gloss reveals a history of scholarly activity.³⁵ The Eadwine Old English gloss is comprised of many elements, including an early and otherwise unattested stratum of glosses, glosses drawn from the type witnessed in the Vespasian Psalter, additions and emendations drawn from the Royal Psalter or a close copy, and further independent updates. As Pulsiano describes it, the Eadwine gloss took its shape 'through adaptation, accretion, revision, and modernisation' and represents concerted scholarly effort.³⁶ The gloss was at points meticulously revised and corrected, and at other places it was modernized from what linguists label Old English into what we call Middle English.³⁷ Multiple scribes referring to several sources worked on the gloss. All of this indicates that the gloss was an important and integral element in the Eadwine programme. Aspects of the gloss would have seemed archaic, but this archaism would have been a powerful sign of Canterbury's Anglo-Saxon past and its long scholarly traditions, stretching back to psalters of the eighth and ninth centuries.³⁸

While the Old English gloss of the Eadwine Psalter is integral and is deeply enmeshed in the artefact's aesthetic and ideological aims, the case is much different with the Canterbury Psalter. In the latter manuscript, the Old English gloss is almost entirely absent, surviving in just a handful of fragments seemingly copied

³³ Gibson, 'Conclusion', p. 213.

³⁴ Markey, 'The Anglo-Norman Version', pp. 152–53.

³⁵ Patrick P. O'Neill, 'The English Version', in *The Eadwine Psalter*, ed. by Gibson, Heslop, and Pfaff, pp. 123–38, and Phillip Pulsiano, 'The Old English Gloss of the *Eadwine Psalter*', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 30 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 166–94.

³⁶ Pulsiano, 'The Old English Gloss', p. 189.

³⁷ O'Neill, 'The English Version', pp. 130 and 132–33.

³⁸ O'Neill, 'The English Version', pp. 135 and 137.

inadvertently from the Eadwine Psalter. There are five fragments of the Old English gloss in the Canterbury Psalter: these are fol. 69^v, Psalm 38. 14; fol. 103^v, Psalm 59. 3; fol. 109^v, Psalm 64. 2; fol. 135^r, Psalm 77. 1; and fol. 154^v, Psalm 87. 2.³⁹ All of these glosses except the one on fol. 109^v are very close reproductions of the gloss in the Eadwine Psalter, retaining what would by then have been extraordinarily archaic linguistic features; and furthermore the visual appearance of the glosses is reproduced as well. In the Canterbury Psalter, these vestiges of the Eadwine Psalter's Old English gloss are mechanical traces of loss, and even as such, they are revealing.

Four of the five Canterbury Psalter glosses (all but the gloss on fol. 69^v) are found in the bottom corners of the page and represent the first lines of a new psalm text. Four of the five (all but the gloss on fol. 135^r) are found on the verso. Except in one instance, the spacing and lineation of the gloss closely follows that in Eadwine. Unlike the other glosses, the one on fol. 69^v preserves the last line of a psalm — Psalm 38 — rather than the first: 'ampli<us> non ero' is glossed 'ma ic ne bio' (I shall not be greater). Eadwine's spacing of the Latin and the gloss is reproduced in the Canterbury Psalter, including 'ma' resting just above the **mp** of 'amplius', and 'ic ne bio' squeezed in just above 'non'. The only variation in the Canterbury Psalter is that the scribe has punctuated the Old English text with a point after 'bio', likely marking the end of the psalm; otherwise the gloss on fol. 69^v of the Canterbury Psalter is a mechanical replication of the Eadwine Psalter, retained on a short line at the end of a text just before the format switches to the wider column of the collects that follow each psalm. Similar mechanical replication is seen on fol. 154^v, where the first few words of Psalm 87 retain their gloss (Plate Xa). In Eadwine, the large illuminated capital **D** is followed by the **NE** overlined to mark the abbreviation, with the subsequent few words on two more lines: 'D<OMI>NE | deus | salutis me' glossed 'dryhten | god | helo minre' (O Lord, God of my salvation). The Canterbury Psalter begins each psalm with a more elaborate illuminated initial, and here the large illuminated block has an ornate **D** followed with unabridged 'O|MI|N|E' (Plate Xb). Beyond this difference in the illuminated initial, the scribe closely follows Eadwine, retaining that same lineation, and even the same stretched *s* to fill the line with 'deus' (though he does not retain the tailed-*e* in 'mee'). The Old English 'dryhten' for 'domine' is either absent or completely painted over by the illuminator's large initial, but otherwise the Canterbury Psalter has the same

³⁹ Hargreaves and Clark, 'An Unpublished Old English Psalter-Gloss Fragment', print the glosses on fols 103^v, 109^v, 135^r, and 154^v; Toswell, 'A Further Old English Gloss', pp. 10–11, prints the gloss on fol. 69^v.

Old English gloss as Eadwine. At fol. 103^v, Eadwine and Canterbury differ in how the Latin text is laid out — for the Paris scribe occasionally evened out spacing — but share the same spacing and lineation in the Old English gloss. The opening of Psalm 59 in Eadwine reads ‘D<EU>S rep|puli|sti nos ȝ | destruxisti’ while in Canterbury it reads ‘DE<US> rep|pulisti | nos ȝ de|struxisti’ (God, you have driven us back and ruined us). Here, the abbreviation for ‘deus’ is different, and both verbs, ‘reppulisti’ and ‘destruxisti’, are divided differently over the lines. However, both manuscripts share the same layout for the Old English gloss ‘[g]od | ðu adri fe | us ȝ | to brece’. The **g** in the Canterbury Psalter’s ‘god’ is occluded by the large illuminated **D** of ‘deus’, and the scribe of the Canterbury Psalter adds a point in punctuation after ‘to brece’, but otherwise the Canterbury Psalter seems to be a line-by-line replication of the Eadwine gloss, even retaining the space between ‘to’ and ‘brece’ which in Eadwine is used to avoid the high *s* in ‘destruxi’, but which is not necessary in the Canterbury Psalter. In these three instances, it appears that the presence of the Old English gloss represents a slip by the scribe, who sometimes mindlessly retained the gloss as he reproduced the text of Eadwine.

In the two other instances, however (at fol. 109^v and fol. 135^r), it seems the scribe knew the meaning of the archaic Old English text. At fol. 109^v, the Eadwine scribe runs into some crowding problems with the Old English: the Latin text ‘TE | decet hymn<us> | d<eu>s in syon &’ is glossed ‘þe | geri|seð | ymen | lofsang | god on sion. ȝ’ (For you a hymn is fitting, God in Zion, and ...) (Plate XIa). The large initial **T** followed by a capital **E** leaves awkward space to the right of the illuminated letter, while the size of the **T** fills the space above the verb ‘decet’ on the next line. As a result, the Old English glossator had to squeeze ‘þe’ in between the **T** and the **E** and displace ‘geri|seð’ to the gap beneath the **E** and to the right of the **T**. Thus, it is not self-evident that the word ‘geriseð’ glosses ‘decet’. The scribe of the Canterbury Psalter handles the layout and glossing smoothly: ‘TE | decet ymnus | d<eu>s in syon. &’ is glossed ‘þe | geriseð lofsang | god in sion ȝ’ (Plate XIb). The ‘þe’ is tucked in right above the **E** of ‘TE’ and ‘geriseð’ is directly above ‘decet’, indicating that the scribe knew it should go there, despite its displacement from ‘decet’ in Eadwine. Furthermore, the Canterbury Psalter scribe records Latin ‘ymnus’ for Eadwine’s ‘hymnus’, and this loss of the initial ‘h’ makes the Latin lemma in the Canterbury Psalter so similar to the Old English loanword in the Eadwine gloss, ‘ymen’, that the Canterbury Psalter scribe leaves it out, making for a clear and well-spaced correspondence between text and gloss.

On fol. 135^r, with the first words of Psalm 77, the situation is a bit more complex (Plate XIIa). In Eadwine, the first words run ‘ATTENDITE | pop<u>l<u>s | meus legem | meam’, with the Old English gloss ‘behaldeð | begymað | folc | min

lage l̥ewe l̥æ | mine' (My people, heed my law). The gloss is clear and direct, and the glosses are placed directly over the appropriate lemmata. Even when there is a lack of space over 'legem', the scribe fits in all three lexical variants just noted. The Canterbury Psalter scribe does something a bit different with both text and gloss: 'AT|TE|ND|IT|E | populus | meus le|gem meam' is glossed 'folc | min | lage l̥ewe l̥æ mine' (Plate XIIb). Here, the large illuminated letter-block of the **A** contains the rest of the word 'tendite'; the abbreviation is absent in 'populus' but it has a stretched final *s* to fill the line; and 'legem' is divided over two lines, thus leaving more space on its line, which the scribe fills with the preceding stretched final *s* in 'meus'. The Latin text is noticeably different in layout than in Eadwine, but the difference can be explained by the likelihood that the Canterbury Psalter scribe was not copying the Roman text from Eadwine here, but rather was copying Eadwine's Hebraic text and its layout (which matches this exactly) into the Roman column.⁴⁰ Using a different layout of the Latin text than in his exemplar, the Canterbury Psalter scribe adjusts his text accordingly; 'behaldeð l̥ begymað' is either absent or is occluded by the illuminated initial capital, but 'folc' is written directly above 'populus' and the three Old English variants of 'legem' are dropped down to the last line, beginning above the last part of that word, with 'mine' following where it should. Here, then, the Canterbury Psalter scribe did not copy the Old English mechanically line for line as he did on fol. 103^v, but rather he made an adjustment in light of a mistake so that the lemmata and glosses were aligned. The condition of these folios suggests that the scribe had some comprehension of the Old English glosses, despite their archaic quality, or at the very least he understood how to position them above the appropriate Latin text based on their layout in Eadwine.

The Canterbury Psalter thus presents an intriguing case. The few Old English glosses that it includes appear to be vestigial, surviving merely by mechanical replication of Eadwine's text and layout. At the same time, the scribe seems to have understood, at least minimally, the gloss that he himself (as a general practice) was not copying. This suggests that the omission of the Old English gloss was deliberate; its fragmentary survival attests to its erasure. It is tempting to imagine a scenario whereby a scribe who could have rendered the Old English gloss into the Canterbury Psalter, and who may have otherwise done so, felt it ought not be included, either because the English was no longer as institutionally useful (as the Anglo-Norman French was), or because he had been asked, for unknown reasons, not to

⁴⁰ In fact, Canterbury Psalter's text of the Hebraic psalm here reads — in its illuminated initial — 'ATT|EN|DI|TE', so he may have copied the first word of Eadwine's Roman text into the space meant for the Hebraic psalm, then replicated this word in the Roman column.

include it. The scribal slip-ups in copying the Old English text reveal a tension between bodily or intellectual habit and cultural or historical imperative. The Canterbury Psalter witnesses the omission of a marker of local identity, tradition, and history: Christ Church's vernacular English.

The omission of the Old English gloss in the Canterbury Psalter represents a significant shift in the culture of Christ Church in the late twelfth century. Old English texts continued to be rewritten at Canterbury into the thirteenth century, as can be seen by the copy of the West-Saxon Gospels in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 38.⁴¹ Indeed, M. J. Toswell suggests that a complete and revised Old English gloss may have been planned for the Canterbury Psalter.⁴² In a manuscript that was copied, illustrated, and assembled quire by quire, closely replicating its exemplar, however, it seems unlikely that a scribe would go back and add to the already completed quires, especially when, in many places, the illuminator was painting over the space (copied from the Eadwine Psalter) that was available for the Old English gloss. The Old English gloss seems to have been deliberately excluded, possibly because the Canterbury Psalter was commissioned as a gift for someone outside of the community who had no interest in Old English.⁴³ This possibility may explain its subsequent provenance on the Continent.⁴⁴ It may be significant in this connection that the Canterbury Psalter appears to have been illuminated by someone outside the community, perhaps a professional itinerant artist.⁴⁵ If so, then this commercialization of Christ Church tradition — a dynamic that resonates with the changing way books were produced in England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries⁴⁶ — itself represents a shift in Christ Church culture. The style of these illuminations is itself revealing of change, in that it is influenced by Byzantine and French styles only recently imported to England.⁴⁷ A tradition of books apparently made for the scholarly, spiritual, and political use of monks at

⁴¹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 325. See also Roy Michael Liuzza, 'Scribal Habit: The Evidence of the Old English Gospels', in *Rewriting Old English*, ed. by Swan and Treharne, pp. 143–65.

⁴² Toswell, 'A Further Old English Gloss', p. 11.

⁴³ Dodwell, 'Final Copy', p. 28.

⁴⁴ Wüstefeld, with Noel and van der Horst, 'Paris Psalter', p. 240.

⁴⁵ Dodwell, 'Final Copy', p. 23.

⁴⁶ *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. II: 1100–1400, ed. by Nigel Morgan and Rodney Thomson (Cambridge, 1998), esp. chaps 1 and 2, pp. 3–21 and 22–38.

⁴⁷ See again Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, at note 28.

Christ Church moved away, in its last instance, from the vernacular and local identity to which it had long been bound.

Conclusion: Book Production and Cultural Change at Canterbury

Study of the Canterbury Psalter raises the question: 'What happened between the 1160s and the 1190s at Christ Church?' Unsurprisingly, the answer may be, 'Thomas Becket and what he stands for'. The late twelfth century was of course a notably tumultuous period for the Christ Church community in particular, and the career and cult of Becket are emblematic of changes that find precise textual expression in the Canterbury Psalter. In the decades after the making of the Eadwine Psalter, the Christ Church community persisted in the same work it had done under Prior Wibert. This work included repair and renovation of the community's buildings and defence of the community's ancient rights. Odo of Canterbury, who succeeded Wibert as prior in 1168, was almost immediately at odds with his archbishop, Becket, who sought to have him deposed in 1169.⁴⁸ Throughout his career as archbishop, Becket was distant and indifferent to the community, even to the point of negligence. He cultivated an international 'princely little court' of artists, canonists, theologians, and writers,⁴⁹ and his attention was always international as well as national in aspect.

In illustration and illumination, the Canterbury Psalter shows significant French and Byzantine influences, and these same influences can be seen in analogous manuscripts imported or commissioned by Becket and his circle. According to the fourteenth-century catalogue of Christ Church's libraries by Henry Eastry, Becket donated books to Christ Church, and many of these were illuminated in a 'clearly French' centre; C. R. Dodwell shows that these books likely came from Pontigny Abbey in Sens, or St Columba's Abbey in Lyon. Furthermore, these books have stylistic links to the more elaborate books given to Christ Church by Herbert of Bosham, Becket's good friend. Herbert was in France between 1170 and 1177, and it seems likely that his donation only came to Canterbury after his exile. The illuminated initials in these manuscripts are in a French style, and it is this style that influences the initials in the Canterbury Psalter.⁵⁰ The Byzantine

⁴⁸ R. M. Thomson, 'Canterbury, Odo of (d. 1200)', in *DNB* [accessed 2 February 2009].

⁴⁹ Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', pp. 61–62.

⁵⁰ Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, p. 102; throughout this paragraph, I rely on Dodwell's account of the manuscripts connected to Becket and Bosham, pp. 102–09.

influences in the manuscript's illustrations — which were perhaps not executed by a member of the community, but which drew on the community's resources — may stem from cultural ties between Christ Church and Byzantine Sicily. Becket's successor as archbishop, Richard of Dover, escorted the English princess Joanna to her marriage to William II of Sicily in 1176. Richard's chancellor, Peter of Blois, who had been William II of Sicily's tutor, lived in Sicily for a few years in the late 1160s before coming to England in 1173.⁵¹ Hubert Walter, archbishop of Canterbury from 1193 to 1205, travelled through Sicily on his way to Canterbury from the Crusade in 1192.⁵² These ties to Byzantine Sicily may lie behind what Dodwell calls 'the second wave of Byzantine influences on Canterbury'⁵³ and, in turn, the Byzantine style of the Canterbury Psalter illustrations. The French and Byzantine effects in that manuscript witness the burgeoning internationalism of Becket's archiepiscopacy. The differences between the Eadwine Psalter and the Canterbury Psalter are signs of dynamic cultural shifts between the 'traditional monastic world' and the 'new world of royal clerks and international lawyers', between the 'old local world' and 'the new perspective of England in Europe' that Becket brought.⁵⁴

If Becket's internationalism flourished without much regard for the Christ Church community, Becket's death instigated the community's internationalizing of itself. Subsequent archbishops may have been at odds with the monks of Christ Church throughout the last decades of the twelfth century, but they agreed entirely on the subject of Becket's cult. The Christ Church monks lost their singular affiliation with the archbishop, especially under Baldwin, who sought to create a residence and college of canons at Hackington in the 1180s — an effort that the monks at Christ Church fought tooth and nail, knowing that it signalled the end of their special status as the archbishop's home community. The rancor between Baldwin and Christ Church was severe and only really ended with Baldwin's departure for the Crusade and ensuing death in 1190.⁵⁵ Reginald fitz Jocelin was elected as Baldwin's successor by the monks at Christ Church, as he had been a supporter of their case against Baldwin's Hackington enterprise, but he died before being

⁵¹ R. W. Southern, 'Blois, Peter of (1125x30–1212)', in *DNB* [accessed 7 January 2009].

⁵² Charles Young, *Hubert Walter, Lord of Canterbury and Lord of England* (Durham, 1968), p. 42; Robert C. Stacey, 'Walter, Hubert (d. 1205)', in *DNB* [accessed 6 January 2009].

⁵³ Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, p. 203.

⁵⁴ Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', p. 62.

⁵⁵ Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', pp. 66–67; Christopher Holdsworth, 'Baldwin (c.1125–1190)', in *DNB* [accessed 3 January 2009].

confirmed. He was succeeded by Hubert Walter, who for the most part had a better relationship with his monks, though they quarrelled from 1197 to 1200 over the revived Hackington plan, and Walter was largely absent from the diocese throughout his tenure.⁵⁶ The monks at Christ Church were 'left to their own devices'.⁵⁷ However, even as the distance between the archbishops and the monks grew, both parties recognized the importance of Becket's shrine and fostered Christ Church as an international pilgrimage site.

After Becket's death, his shrine became internationally known 'from the Baltic to Sicily',⁵⁸ thus providing a major source of income that helped fund the restoration of the cathedral after the fire of 1174. In some respects, these renovations of the cathedral reflect the changes seen between the Eadwine Psalter and the Canterbury Psalter. The reconstructions realigned the Christ Church community to a more global outlook: the Trinity Chapel, its crypt, and the 'Corona' (a round tower added to the east end of the cathedral, and named after the top of Becket's head) were dedicated to Becket's reliquaries to accommodate the many pilgrims. The new structures were designed in an emergent Gothic style under the direction first of the architect William of Sens and then of his successor William the Englishman. The work of these two architects not only brought the structure up to date in regard to the nascent Gothic movement in France, but also reshaped the cathedral in order to highlight the shrines dedicated to Becket.⁵⁹ The cathedral was remade in a more international, modern, and Gothic image, just as the Utrecht tradition was refashioned in the Canterbury Psalter.

The Christ Church community's natural conservatism thus often was integrated into innovative and dynamic cultural articulations. The series of manuscripts in the Utrecht Psalter tradition invoke the past even as they modernized and innovated. In the Canterbury Psalter, this set of contradictory impulses plays out at the level of the individual scribe, who strives to reproduce the complexities of the Eadwine Psalter, yet who suppresses the Old English gloss. In its inadvertent manifestations, this gloss betrays the persistence and resilience of Christ Church's vernacular and local identity in a manuscript that clearly represents a break from

⁵⁶ Young, *Hubert Walter*, pp. 56–69.

⁵⁷ Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', p. 68.

⁵⁸ Gibson, 'Normans and Angevins', p. 63.

⁵⁹ M. F. Hearn, 'Canterbury Cathedral and the Cult of Becket', *Art Bulletin*, 76 (1994), 19–52. See also Peter Draper, 'Interpretations of the Rebuilding of Canterbury Cathedral, 1174–1186: Archaeological and Historical Evidence', *Journal of the Society of Architectural History*, 56 (1997), 184–203 (esp. pp. 194, 198, and 201).

that past. Even though the Eadwine Psalter is reproduced so closely, international and Gothic influences are evident in its illuminations and illustrations; the book's production shows signs of the secularization and professionalization of book making in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England; and the Old English language — once a powerful ideological instrument for Christ Church — is under erasure. In the changes between the Eadwine Psalter and the Canterbury Psalter, we see the changes of Canterbury's cultural horizons, as Christ Church became a major monastic centre and pilgrimage destination in England and in Europe.

In a review published in the year 2000, A. N. Doane eloquently advocated the 'thick description' of manuscripts,⁶⁰ envisioning an approach to manuscript studies that sheds light on the interplay between historical change and aesthetic developments in medieval book production — for example, the succession of adaptations and renovations in the Utrecht Psalter tradition that can be traced in Canterbury between *c.* AD 1000 and 1200. By acutely focusing on the physical details of a manuscript and closely historicizing it as a cultural artefact, some of the dynamics of its genesis become legible. Such a reading of the Canterbury Psalter demonstrates the shift in Christ Church from the local, conservative, and retrospective towards the international, modernizing, and yet still retrospective. In the Canterbury Psalter, like in its exemplar, the 'tectonic meeting of old and new' led to innovations, just as we might consider the ways the community looked back to Becket as a way to shape (and fund) the community's future. One of these innovations was a remaking of a monumental book (the Eadwine Psalter) almost entirely without its Old English gloss. Yet, with its vestigial Old English survivals, the Canterbury Psalter preserves traces of a scribe's work that inclined towards the traditional vernacular identity of Christ Church: the book is a witness to both human habit and historical imperative. Doane's advocacy of 'thick description' in manuscript studies opens up possibilities for the recovery of cultural, historical, and anthropological insights into the past. The present case study of the Canterbury Psalter calls attention to the end of Old English psalter glossing, but it also points to the beginnings of a more international and cosmopolitan era for the Christ Church community.

⁶⁰ A. N. Doane, review of *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (Aldershot, 1998), in *Envoi*, 9 (2000), 56–78 (pp. 56–57).

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MIDDLE ENGLISH SECULAR LYRIC: TEXTS, MUSIC, MANUSCRIPT CONTEXT

Karl Reichl

In 1972 George Kane wrote that ‘the poems which by convention we call secular lyrics are among the worst served by medievalists of the writings from the Middle English period’.¹ Although some progress has been made since then, Kane’s observation is still relevant today. One of the reasons for this neglect is that we know very little about the Middle English secular lyric, especially in its early stages. Unlike the situation in Southern France, no *vida* or biography of a Middle English poet is extant; in fact, practically no names of authors are known and, at least for the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, only very few poems have been transmitted. The lyrics that have been preserved can, however, be made to speak. By paying close attention to their manuscript context it can be shown that they are the works of a richer poetic tradition than the sparse remains at first suggest. While this tradition is firmly set within a larger European context, it yet has its own poetic and musical physiognomy.

The Problem of Beginnings

Sir Maurice Bowra wrote in 1961 that

The lyric poetry of modern Europe springs suddenly on our notice about the year 1100. Yet we have no right to assume that before this date songs hardly existed. There were the

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¹ George Kane, ‘A Short Essay on the Middle English Secular Lyric’, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 73 (1972), 110–21 (p. 110).

Latin poems of the Dark Ages, and there were other secular and vernacular songs, like that which the monks of Ely sang in the time of King Canute. There were even songs about love. In the eleventh century short refrains in a primitive Spanish were written in Hebrew or Arabic script and attached to Hebrew and Arabic love-songs. They were composed in Moorish Spain, and were undeniably European, a forecast of what was to come later and ample evidence for short, lively songs about love.²

Information on King Canute (or Cnut, 1016–35) and the song of the monks of Ely is found in the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*. We are told in chapter 85 of book II how one Candlemas, King Cnut and Queen Emma came by boat on the river Ouse to Ely. As they were approaching the church, the sound of the monks singing the Divine Office was heard.³ Inspired by their singing, the King composed a song in English beginning as follows:

fol. 73^v Merie sungen ðe muneches binnen Ely
 fol. 74^r ða C[n]ut ching reu ðer/ by.
 ‘Roweþ, chñites, noer the land
 and here wye þes muneches sæng.’⁴

[Merrily sang the monks in Ely,
 when King Cnut was rowing nearby.
 ‘Row, knights, nearer to the land
 and let us listen to the singing of these monks.’]

The King sang this song ‘piously and harmoniously’, together with his entourage, the *optimates regni*.⁵ The song, of which the chronicler transmits only the beginning,

² Maurice Bowra, *Mediaeval Love-Song*, John Coffin Memorial Lecture Delivered before the University of London on 28 November 1961 (London, 1961), p. 1.

³ See *Liber Eliensis*, ed. by E. O. Blake, Camden Third Series, 92 (London, 1962), p. 153. Translations are my own.

⁴ I have transcribed the text newly from Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.1 (= M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge*, 4 vols (Cambridge, 1900–04), no. 1105). Underlined *w* denotes *wyn*; punctuation and the use of capitals have been regularized; emendations are in square brackets. In line 2 the MS has *chut*, in line 3 *chñtes*. The poem is written as prose, but with verse punctuation (dots after *Ely*, *by*, *land* and *sæng*). For a facsimile, see C. W. Stubbs, *Historical Memorials of Ely Cathedral* (London, 1897), p. 7. The poem is no. 2164 in the *Index of Middle English Verse* (henceforth abbreviated *IMEV*): Carleton Brown and R. H. Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943), R. H. Robbins and J. L. Cutler, *Supplement to the Index of Middle English Verse* (Lexington, KY, 1965), and Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, *A New Index of Middle English Verse* (London, 2005).

⁵ ‘Hoc rex agitans, non quieuit cum venerabili collegio pie ac dulciter concinere, donec perveniret ad terram’ (Having said this, the King did not desist from singing piously and harmoniously with the honourable company until he landed). *Liber Eliensis*, ed. by Blake, p. 154.

was still in the twelfth century sung publicly, possibly as a round or a dance song (*in choris*).⁶ We have no information about the melody of the song, and of the text only a fragment has been preserved. This fragment does not indicate great poetic qualities, but the song had obviously impressed the contemporaries. As a text coming from the reign of Cnut it belongs strictly speaking still to the Anglo-Saxon period; the linguistic form of the poem as found in the *Liber Eliensis*, however, is Middle English. It is possible that the song has been linked to Cnut apocryphally and was actually composed after Cnut's death.⁷

'Cnut's Song' is an isolated case; all other sources are silent on the lyric production of the time. It is an occasional poem, not without charm perhaps — we are not quite sure — but certainly in no ways comparable to the Romance *kharjas* of the Arabic (and Hebrew) *muwashshaha* and *zajal* of the Iberian Peninsula.⁸ Bowra is right: these *kharjas* are 'a forecast of what was to come later' — something which cannot be said of 'Cnut's Song'.⁹ A generation after Cnut's reign, England was conquered by the Norman duke William, with the result that English as a language of writing and literature had to cede its place to French. In a rhymed chronicle from the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century that goes under the name of Robert of Gloucester, the linguistic situation in England after the Norman Conquest is described not without bitterness:

⁶ '[...] que usque hodie in choris puplice cantantur et in proverbii memorantur' ([...] which are sung till this day publicly in choral dances and are remembered in proverbial sayings). *Liber Eliensis*, ed. by Blake, p. 154. The statement that Cnut's song was performed as a round or dance song has led to the erroneous interpretation of this song as our earliest surviving English ballad or rather ballad refrain. See F. B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* (London, 1907), pp. 58–61; for criticism of this view, see Louise Pound, 'King Cnut's Song and Ballad Origins', *Modern Language Notes*, 34 (1919), 161–65, and G. H. Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* (New York, 1932), pp. 195–96.

⁷ The orthography shows archaic traits and a number of idiosyncracies (*ching* instead of *cing*, *chnit* instead of *cnibt*, 'hyper-correct' *seng* instead of *sang* and others). The form *merie* is Kentish; the form *noer* also seems to be Kentish (from OE Kentish *nēor* instead of West Saxon *nēar* 'nearer'). W. W. Skeat noted: 'The lines were clearly written by a Norman scribe, whose pronunciation of English was imperfect, and the spelling is as quaint as that of the Domesday Book' (in Stubbs, *Historical Memorials*, p. 50).

⁸ The *kharja* is the final refrain of the type of poem known in classical Arabic as *muwashshaha* and in colloquial Arabic as *zajal*.

⁹ The Romance verses in the Arabic and Hebrew lyrics of the Iberian peninsula have been the subject of a great number of studies; for a recent interpretation, see Otto Zwartjes, *Love Songs from Al-Andalus: History, Structure and Meaning of the 'Kharja'* (Leiden, 1997).

Þus com, lo, Engeland in-to Normandies hond:
 And þe Normans ne couþe speke þo bote hor owe speche,
 And speke French as hii dude atom, and hor children dude also teche,
 So þat heiemen of þis lond, þat of hor blod come,
 Holdeþ alle þulke speche þat hii of hom nome;
 Vor bote a man conne Frenss me telþ of him lute.
 Ac lowe men holdeþ to Engliss, and hor owe speche yute.
 Ich wene þer ne beþ in al þe world contreyes none
 Þat ne holdeþ to hor owe speche, bote Engeland one.¹⁰

[Behold, thus came England into the possession of Normandy: and the Normans could at that time only speak their own language, and they spoke French as they did at home and as they also taught their children, so that the nobles of this country who are descended from them keep to the same language they took from home; because unless a man knows French he is little esteemed. But the common people still keep to English and their own language. I think there is none among all the countries of the world that does not keep to its own language, except England alone.]

The author stresses that French was the language of the ruling classes in England still in his own time, while the status of English, although continuing to be spoken by the common people (*lowe men*), did not come up to that of French. Anglo-French (or Anglo-Norman) had by the fourteenth century, however, ceased to be a prestigious variety of French. In one of the episodes of the *Roman de Renart* a minstrel from England is ridiculed on account of his insular French pronunciation.¹¹ Chaucer notes in a well-known passage in the *General Prologue* of his *Canterbury Tales* that the Prioress speaks French elegantly, but — regrettably we are made to understand — according to the ‘school of Stratford atte Bowe’ since Parisian French was unknown to her. French continues to exert an important influence on English literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but now in its Parisian rather than insular variety.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that evidence for a continual development of the English lyric from the end of the Anglo-Saxon period to the

¹⁰ Quoted from *Early Middle English Texts*, ed. by Bruce Dickins and R. M. Wilson (New York, 1951), p. 14 (from London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A XI).

¹¹ See M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French with Especial Consideration of Anglo-Norman: Phonology and Morphology*, rev. edn (Manchester, 1952), p. 425. The passage in question is found in branch Ib of the *Roman de Renart*, lines 2393–2532; see *Le Roman de Renart: Première Branche, Jugement de Renart, Siège de Maupertuis, Renart Teinturier*, ed. by Mario Roques, *Classiques Français du Moyen Âge*, 78 (Paris, 1948), pp. 81–85.

thirteenth century is scarce.¹² In the centuries following the Norman Conquest the dominant secular culture was French, so that the recording of Middle English secular poetry in writing was rare and only marginal. Among the manuscripts of early Norman England (c. 1066–1130) there is a predominance of Latin texts. Only sporadically do we find Old English texts that were still being written down at the end of the eleventh century, such as Ælfric's homilies, or texts that extend from the Anglo-Saxon to the early Middle English period, such as the *Peterborough Chronicle*.¹³ Anglo-French texts begin to be written down in the first half of the twelfth century, with the earliest manuscripts datable to the middle of the twelfth century.¹⁴ The earliest Middle English texts (apart from 'Cnut's Song') are found in manuscripts from the beginning of the thirteenth century; some of these texts, however, might have been composed in the twelfth century.¹⁵ The lyrics extant from this period are so few in number that in the search for the beginnings of the Middle English secular lyric every single hint has to be followed. The meagre corpus of lyrics has to be carefully scrutinized for what it might tell us about the contemporary situation of lyric poetry in the vernacular. The most important clues for a lyric tradition are found in the poems' manuscript contexts. As will be argued below, despite the restricted number of early Middle English secular lyrics, the evidence points to the existence of a flourishing lyric tradition of no small significance, one that can hold its own in a European framework with regard to both poetry and music.

¹² Peter Dronke sees in some Middle English verse a continuity to OE elegiac poems on account of allusions to an unspecified narrative context; these similarities, however, might be the result of a fragmentary transmission rather than the sign of a continuity. See Peter Dronke, 'On the Continuity of Medieval English Love-Lyric', in *England and the Continental Renaissance: Essays in Honour of J. B. Trapp*, ed. by Edward Chaney and Peter Mack (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 7–21.

¹³ For details, see Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c. 1066–1130)* (Oxford, 1999).

¹⁴ See the list in Johan Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature* (London, 1923), pp. 41–50, and the comprehensive survey by Ruth J. Dean, with Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publications Series, 3 (London, 1999). See also the discussion in M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 7–26.

¹⁵ See C. E. Wright, *English Vernacular Hands from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1960), pp. ix–xii.

Manuscript Transmission: English in the Context of French and Latin

The linguistic and cultural diversity of medieval England is reflected in the manuscript transmission of Middle English poetry. This is particularly true of the early Middle English period. Not one manuscript from the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in which lyrics are found has English poems only. Many of these manuscripts are miscellanies, with texts in various forms, genres, and languages. The languages are Latin, French, and English. Interestingly, the manuscript tradition of English texts is separate from that of texts in any of the Celtic languages of Britain; this is not to say, however, that there are no Celtic influences of a linguistic and possibly also metrical kind on Middle English lyrics.¹⁶

In view of the cultural predominance of French in medieval England, any discussion of the Middle English lyric without reference to the French lyric tradition must seem problematic or at least one-sided. The same can be said about the relationship of the Middle English lyric and the medieval Latin lyric, in particular when it comes to religious lyrics, for the Middle English religious lyric developed in close symbiosis with Latin liturgical and sacred poetry. The simultaneous existence of several languages is conspicuous in poems composed in different languages. Among these there is a comparatively early lyric in Latin, French, and English that describes love and its effect on the lover:

Amor est *quedam* mentis insania
Que vagum *hominem* ducit *per* deuia,
 Sitit *delicias et* bibit *tristia*,
 Crebris *doloribus* commiscens gaudia.

Amur est vne *pensee* *enragee*
 Ke le *vdif humme* meyne *par* veie deueye,
 Ke a *seyf de delices* e ne beyt ke *tristesces*
 E od *souenns* *dolurs* medle sa [*ioliesces*].

Loue is a *selkud* wodenesse
 Pat þe idel mon ledeth by wildernesse,

¹⁶ Celtic influences are particularly prominent in the English poems of the so-called Kildare manuscript, composed in an Anglo-Irish dialect (London, British Library, MS Harley 913); see *Die Kildare-Gedichte: Die ältesten mittelenenglischen Denkmäler in anglo-irischer Überlieferung*, ed. by Wilhelm Heuser, *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, 14 (Bonn, 1904), and *Anglo-Irish Poems of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Angela M. Lucas (Blackrock, 1995). A special case is London, British Library, MS Additional 14997, which contains, apart from poems by various Welsh bards, magic formulas and recipes in English and Latin as well as the occasional poem in English. See *A Selection of English Carols*, ed. by R. L. Greene (Oxford, 1962), p. 175.

þat þurstes of wilfulscipe and drinket sorwenesse
And with lomful sorwes menget his blithnesse.¹⁷

[Love is a strange craziness
which leads an idle man into the wilderness,
a man who thirsts for pleasure and instead drinks grief
and whose joys are mixed with frequent sorrows.]

The motif of love-sickness is widely diffused, not only in medieval lyric poetry. Rather than discuss this motif and its expression in these three parallel stanzas, I would like to focus here on the verses' manner of transmission. The manuscript containing these verses (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139) comes from the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century. The text is found on fol. 157^r; it follows a description (in Latin) of the form and weight of the shilling and was written into a space left empty on the page (Figure 16).

This manuscript is of great interest in more than one respect. Its contents consist mainly of legal texts, especially statutes and charters; among these texts are the laws of Edward the Confessor (in Latin), the statutes of Gloucester (in French verse), and a copy of the *Magna Carta* dated 1253. There are entries referring to Coventry, a fact which makes it highly probable that the manuscript was compiled in the Benedictine abbey of Coventry (see below). In addition to the trilingual poem just quoted, the manuscript preserves one of the best-known early Middle English love poems, the two-part song 'Fowles in þe frith', as well as a French motet. All of this gives us important clues about the form and transmission of the Middle English lyric: the early Middle English lyrics were mostly composed as songs, even if their melody has only rarely been preserved. The poems have often been transmitted only 'marginally', sometimes literally in the margins of a manuscript page, more often on spaces left empty after the completion of a text. Finally, the scribes are clerics: monks of the older orders as here, and from the thirteenth century onwards also friars, in particular Franciscans. This also explains why most extant early Middle English poems are of a religious nature.

¹⁷ The text has been newly transcribed from the manuscript (for editorial conventions, see note 4 above); see Figure 16. The verses are edited in *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, ed. by Carleton Brown (Oxford, 1932), pp. 14–15 (no. 9); for the English stanza, see *IMEV*, no. 2005. The rhyme word in the fourth line of the French text is *tristeece* in the manuscript. For parallels, see *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. 170, and P. Meyer, 'Mélanges de poésie Anglo-Normande', *Romania*, 4 (1875), 370–97 (pp. 382–84). Meyer erroneously omits line 4 of the French text. As to the dialect of the English stanza, it is to be noted that *selkud* occurs in early texts of the South-west Midland area; the endings of the verbs point to the Midland area or possibly to an Anglo-Norman scribe; the word *lomful* 'frequent' is only found in this text.

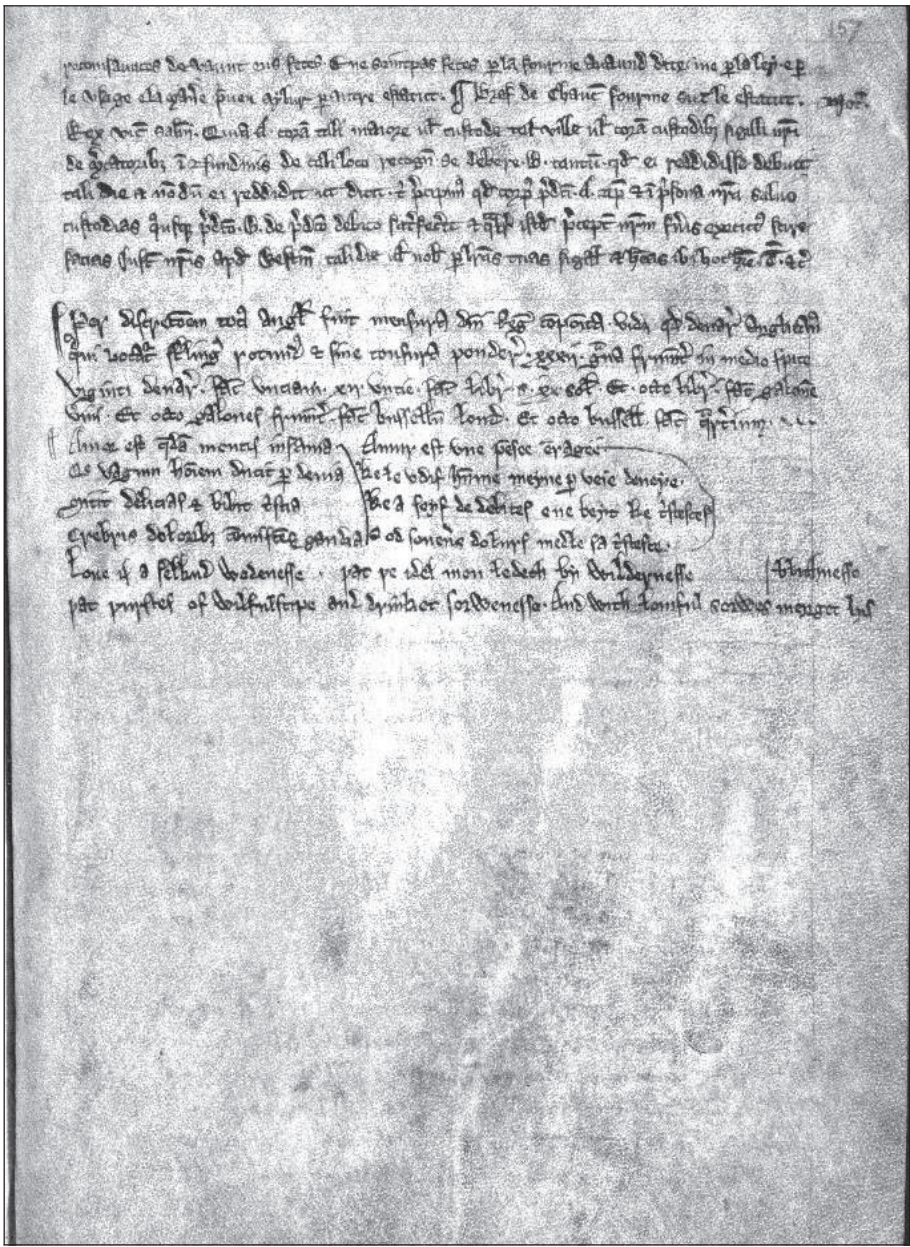


Figure 16. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139, fol. 157r. Thirteenth century.
Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Up to the beginning of the fourteenth century, only a few secular Middle English lyrics have come down to us, compared with what is seen in other European traditions. The standard edition of the English lyric of the thirteenth century by Carleton Brown, which is virtually comprehensive, comprises about one hundred texts, of which only a good dozen can be counted as representatives of secular poetry. As in other medieval literatures, the borderline between secular and religious poetry is porous and fuzzy. The Marian lyric was influenced by the love lyric and vice versa; meditative poems can be seen in a secular or in a religious context; and for many secular poems, religious *contrafacta* can be found. Apposite examples of this Janus-faced nature of the medieval lyric are the last two poems in Brown's anthology, which are similar in wording and are clearly conceived as companion pieces, the one appropriately entitled by Brown 'The Way of Christ's Love', the other 'The Way of Woman's Love'. The first of these begins with these lines:

Lvtel wot hit any mon
hou loue hym haueþ ybounde
þat for vs on þe rode ron
and bohte vs wiþ is wounde.

[No one well knows
how love has bound Him
who bled for us on the cross
and brought us salvation with his wounds.]

The second has the beginning:

Lutel wot hit any mon
hou derne loue may stonde,
bote hit were a fre wymmon
þat muche of loue had fonde.

[No one well knows
how secret love may have duration,
unless it were a noble lady
who had much experience in love.]

Scholars are divided on the question of whether the religious poem was the model for the secular poem or vice versa.¹⁸ This example demonstrates that one has to be

¹⁸ Both lyrics are found in London, British Library, MS Harley 2253 (see below); they are edited in *The Harley Lyrics: The Middle English Lyrics of MS. Harley 2253*, ed. by G. L. Brook, 4th edn (Manchester, 1968), pp. 70–72, from which I quote. See *IMEV*, nos 1922 (religious) and 1933 (secular); for an interpretation, see Richard Firth Green, 'The Two "Litel Wot Hit Any Mon" Lyrics in Harley 2253', *Mediaeval Studies*, 51 (1989), 304–12.

aware of the ambiguous and indeterminate character of some of our testimonies when searching for the beginnings of the Middle English secular lyric.

The complete corpus of the Middle English secular lyric up to Chaucer in the second half of the fourteenth century is anonymous. Religious lyrics occasionally bear the name of their author; the earliest known author is St Godric (d. 1170), to whom three religious songs are attributed.¹⁹ As to the music, E. J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison, in their *Medieval English Songs*, edit only twenty songs from this early period, of which only about a quarter are secular.

It is especially when looking at Old Provençal and Old French lyric poetry that the early Middle English lyric takes on the aspect of a poor relation. About 2600 troubadour poems are extant, with over 250 melodies, while the corpus of trouvère lyrics comprises about two thousand texts, with c. 1400 melodies.²⁰ Even if other European traditions are not quite as copious as this, at least for this early period, it has to be admitted that by comparison with the Portuguese-Galician, the Italian, and the Middle High German lyric, the Middle English lyric is extraordinarily sparsely attested.

An important element in our evaluation of the lyric production in England from the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century is the Latin tradition. While the Norman Conquest changed the linguistic situation in England with regard to the vernacular, the use of Latin continued unbroken from Anglo-Saxon England into Angevin Britain. This continuity can be illustrated by two manuscripts of European importance for the development of polyphony, one from the turn of the first millenium, the other from the end of the twelfth century. To the late Anglo-Saxon period belongs the Winchester Troper (CCCC, MS 473), which with its over 150 *organa* is one of the great monuments of early polyphony.²¹ Of simpler appearance and smaller size is the manuscript of the so-called Later Cambridge Songs (CUL, MS Ff.i.17(1)). This manuscript is dated to the period

¹⁹ Edited with their melodies in *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by E. J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison (London, 1979), pp. 103–09, 228–29, 295–96.

²⁰ These numbers are based on Alfred Pillet and Henry Carstens, *Bibliographie der Troubadours* (Halle, 1933) for Old Provençal and on G. Raynaud and Hans Spanke, *Bibliographie des altfranzösischen Liedes*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1955) for Old French; see also H. van der Werf, *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères: A Study of the Melodies and their Relation to the Poems* (Utrecht, 1972), pp. 14–16.

²¹ The Winchester Troper consists strictly speaking of two manuscripts; the second is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 775; the *organa* are found in CCCC 473. For a facsimile edition with an introduction, see *The Winchester Troper*, ed. by Susan Rankin, Early English Church Music, 50 (London, 2007).

between 1180 and 1230 and contains thirty-five poems, of which twenty-seven are notated; fourteen of the notated texts are one-part songs, twelve are two-part songs, and one is a three-part song. Most of the poems are religious, but a few of them are secular. This manuscript is an important document of early polyphony in the wake of the School of St Martial of Limoges.²² There are a number of concordances with other key manuscripts of early polyphony, such as the Las Huelgas manuscript (Burgos, Monasterio de Santa Maria la Real de Las Huelgas, Codex IX) and the Florentine manuscript Pluteus 29.1 of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, but also with other important sources of the medieval Latin lyric, for instance the collection of the *Carmina Burana* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS Clm 4660 and 4660a). As John Stevens has shown in his edition and study of the Later Cambridge Songs, it is probable that CUL Ff.i.17(1) originates from the abbey of the Austin Canons in Leicester. The songs demonstrate the closeness of cultural ties between England and the Continent.²³

The predominance of French in the higher strata of society in England after the Norman Conquest, much regretted by 'Robert of Gloucester', leads one to surmise that in addition to Latin lyrics, poetry in Anglo-French must have been cultivated in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. For this assumption, however, only sparse proofs can be furnished. It is true that in the Angevin period a rich literary culture flourished at the English court, especially under Henry II, as Reto Bezzola has shown in great detail in his study of the beginnings of courtly literature.²⁴ It seems certain that Bernart de Ventadorn visited England, possibly also Marcabru, and a number of troubadours had close connections to English kings. A favourite

²² There is no space here to discuss England's role in the development of polyphony. A number of important manuscripts come from Britain, such as the so-called 'Worcester Fragments' and the Notre Dame-Codex W₁ (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, MS 628, olim Helmst. 677). For a survey of early polyphony, one that also takes account of the Winchester Troper and the Later Cambridge Songs, see Sarah Fuller, 'Early Polyphony', in *The Early Middle Ages to 1300*, ed. by Richard Crocker and David Hiley, New Oxford History of Music, 2, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1990), pp. 485–556; for a brief, informative discussion of medieval English music, see Peter M. Lefferts, 'Medieval England, 950–1450', in *Antiquity and the Middle Ages: From Ancient Greece to the 15th Century*, ed. by James McKinnon, Man and Music, 1 (London, 1990), pp. 170–96.

²³ See *The Later Cambridge Songs: An English Song Collection of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by John Stevens (Oxford, 2005), and (text only) Otto Schumann, 'Die jüngere Cambridger Lieder-sammlung', *Studi Medievali*, n.s., 16 (1943–50), 48–85.

²⁴ See Reto R. Bezzola, *Les Origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident (500–1200)*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, 286, 313, 319–20, 3 vols in 4 (Paris, 1958–67), III, 3–207 (Henry II) and 247–311 (Aliénor d'Aquitaine).

with them was Richard Cœur de Lion, whose participation in the Third Crusade, captivity, and early death (in 1199) was sung in poetry by such famous poets as Folquet de Marselha, Bertran de Born, Peire Vidal, Gaucelm Faidit, and Giraut de Bornelh. As, however, the Angevin kings spent only part of their lives in England and spoke no English, the literature of their court was only nominally connected to England. Troubadour lyrics from the times of Henry II or Richard I cannot therefore be claimed for England, whatever the points of contact of the Provençal poets with England might have been.²⁵ Interestingly, a French song composed by Richard I on the topic of his captivity is counted among the output of the *trouvères*. It is preserved in a number of French or Provençal *chansonniers*, but in no manuscript connected to England.²⁶

When it comes to the Anglo-French lyric, it is surprising that the flowering of literature under Henry II was not continued in the French-speaking court of his successors or in the circles of the French-speaking nobility in Britain. The Anglo-French lyric corpus is comparatively small, and the poems are mostly of a religious or moralizing bent. Johan Vising lists about twenty texts in his survey of Anglo-Norman (Anglo-French) poetry under the rubric 'secular lyric'. Similarly restricted is the corpus of texts that M. Dominica Legge discusses in her chapter on the lyric in her history of Anglo-Norman literature; a somewhat longer list is given in Ruth Dean's survey.²⁷ The number of secular French lyrics is increased if one adds John Gower's 'Cinkante Balades'. Gower's contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer also composed many a poem in the *formes fixes* of the late Middle Ages (*balade*, *rondeau*, *virelai*), probably in French, as he tells us in the prologue of the *Legend of Good Women*. It is possible, but hardly provable, that the French poems in a manuscript of the University of Pennsylvania, especially those signed 'Ch', are some of these 'balades, roundels, virelayes'.²⁸ A comparatively representative edition of Anglo-French lyrics comprises fifty-two texts, of which only nine are 'poems on love and

²⁵ On the troubadours and their relationship to England, see Jean Audiau, *Les Troubadours et l'Angleterre: contribution à l'étude des poètes anglais de l'amour au moyen-âge (XIII^e et XIV^e siècles)* (Paris, 1927), and H. J. Chaytor, *The Troubadours and England* (Cambridge, 1923).

²⁶ It is no. 1891 in Raynaud and Spanke, *Bibliographie*; the poem is edited (with its music) in *Chanter m'estuet: Songs of the Trouvères*, ed. by Samuel N. Rosenberg and Hans Tischler (London, 1981), pp. 195–98.

²⁷ See Vising, *Anglo-Norman Language and Literature*, pp. 61–63; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp. 332–61; Dean, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, pp. 66–87 (almost fifty items).

²⁸ See James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch' in University of Pennsylvania MS French 15*, Chaucer Studies, 9 (Cambridge, 1982).

friendship'.²⁹ From the period between c. 1150 and 1350, seventeen French songs have been preserved; of these, seven are religious poems, while the rest are love songs, Crusade songs, or poems on various secular topics.³⁰ This is a fairly meagre harvest by comparison to the c. two thousand texts and 1400 melodies of the *trouvère* repertoire.

The scanty remains of the Anglo-French lyric show that the comparatively small number of early Middle English lyrics cannot be explained (at least not exclusively) by the linguistic dominance of French in the higher social classes of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England. There must be other reasons for the limited corpus of early Middle English lyrics. One of these might simply be the loss of manuscripts. There is no denying that much must have been lost in the course of time. A number of allusions to the composition and performance of lyrics found in chronicles, such as the *Liber Eliensis* mentioned above, and some extant fragments indicate that the preserved record of secular lyric poetry is indeed incomplete. Sermons are one of the places where fragmentary poems are found. In an English sermon of the thirteenth century, the preacher chooses two popular verses as his theme:

Atte wrastlinge mi *lemman* i ches,
and atte ston-kasting i him for-les.³¹

[I chose my darling at the wrestling match
and I lost him at the putting of stones.]

As is to be expected of a sermon, this poem is interpreted by the preacher in a figurative and religious sense: the darling is Jesus, who is chosen by the hearers of God's word, the ringers, but who is cast away like a stone by those who do not hear the word of God. In a second sermon (in a fourteenth-century manuscript) these lines are interpreted differently, now in Latin: the darling is the sinner who is chosen by divine mercy, but who has to be cast away on account of the successful temptations

²⁹ See *The Anglo-Norman Lyric: An Anthology*, ed. from the manuscripts with translations and commentary by David L. Jeffrey and Brian J. Levy, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts, 93 (Toronto, 1990).

³⁰ See John Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List of Anglo-Norman Songs c.1150–c.1350', *Plain-song and Medieval Music*, 3 (1994), 1–22. This list does not contain motets and fragments; see *ibid.*, p. 2.

³¹ Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.1.45 (James no. 43); the sermon is found on fols 41^v–42^r. The quotations from the sermon are newly transcribed; the verse (*IMEV*, no. 445) is found on fol. 41^v. For an edition of the sermon, see Max Förster, 'Kleinere mittlenglische Texte', *Anglia*, 42 (1918), 145–224 (pp. 152–54); on the date, see James, *Western Manuscripts*, I, 56, and Förster, 'Kleinere mittlenglische Texte', p. 148.

of the Devil.³² There can be no doubt that these lines come from a secular song. This is also confirmed by the preacher, who (in the thirteenth-century manuscript) informs us that these verses come from a popular round-dance or *carole*:

Mi leue frend, wilde wimmen *and* golme i mi contreie, wan he go o þe ring, among manie
opere songis, þat litil ben wort þat tei singin, so sein þei þus: 'Atte wrastli <n>ge mi lemman
etc.'³³

In connection with this and similar fragments, R. M. Wilson writes in his book on the lost literature of medieval England:

It is clear enough that there must have been a flourishing lyrical literature in English during the twelfth century, though almost nothing now remains of it. It is equally certain that the later extant lyrical poetry represents a mere fraction of that actually composed.³⁴

Nevertheless, it does not seem entirely convincing that loss of manuscripts is the only explanation for the scarcity of secular lyrics. It has been repeatedly said that the early Middle English lyric cannot be contextualized in the same way as Old Provençal or Middle High German lyric poetry. Almost no poets' names are known; Godric is an exception, and Richard I is not part of the English tradition. Raymond Oliver has expressed this fact appropriately in the title of his book on the Middle English lyric: *Poems without Names*.³⁵ Similarly, there is hardly any information on the contexts of performance of the Middle English secular lyric, on the circles cultivating lyric poetry, on the occasions of performance and the audience. This fact has also been concisely expressed in the title of a study of the Middle English lyric by John Burrow: 'Poems without Contexts'.³⁶ Although the early Middle English lyric appears to us as poetry without names and without contexts, there exists nevertheless a possibility of contextualization. This possibility derives from a closer study of the manuscript transmission of the lyrics. In the manuscripts there is a context, which is generally obscured when the poems are anthologized in isolation. What this manuscript context can tell us about a poem is the subject of the following sections.

³² CUL, MS Ii.3.8, fols 86^r–89^v; on this manuscript, see Siegfried Wenzel, *Macaronic Sermons: Bilingualism and Preaching in Late-Medieval England* (Ann Arbor, 1994), pp. 133–40. The verses of both versions are edited in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by R. H. Robbins, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1955), p. xxxix; for a corrected text of the later version, see Theo Stemmler, 'More English Texts from MS. Cambridge University Library Ii.III.8', *Anglia*, 93 (1975), 1–16 (p. 9).

³³ Förster, 'Kleinere mittenglische Texte', p. 152; *golme* is to be read as *gome* 'man'.

³⁴ R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England*, 2nd edn (London, 1970), p. 163.

³⁵ Raymond Oliver, *Poems without Names: The English Lyric, 1200–1500* (Berkeley, 1970).

³⁶ J. A. Burrow, 'Poems without Contexts', *Essays in Criticism*, 29 (1979), 6–32.

Poems in the Margins: London, British Library, MS Royal 8.D.xiii

The Middle English poem found in London, British Library, MS Royal 8.D.xiii is literally 'marginal': it is written in pencil in the upper margin of fol. 25^r. The manuscript contains Latin texts, among them as main text the *Diadema monachorum* by Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel (died c. 830); it is dated to the early twelfth century and belonged originally to the priory of Worcester Cathedral (fol. 2^r has the entry 'Liber ecclesie cathedralis Beate Marie Wygornensis'). The English text is written as prose; it is very difficult to read and has given rise to different transcriptions (especially of the first line).

- [Pe]h þet hi can wittes ful [i]wis,
 Of worldles blisse nabbe ic nout,
 For a lafdi þet is pris
 Of alle þet in bure goð.
 5 Seþen furst þe heo was his,
 Iloken *in* castel-wal of ston
 Nes ic hol ne bliþe iwis
 Ne þriuinde mon.
 Lifð mon non biledð me
 10 Abiden *and* bliþe for to boe.
 Ned efter me deað me longgeð,
 I mai siggen wel by me,
 Herde þet wo honggeð.³⁷

³⁷ *IMEV*, no. 3512; edited in *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. xii; *Medieval English Lyrics 1200–1400*, ed. by Thomas G. Duncan (Harmondsworth, 1995), p. 15 (no. 7). Brown notes: 'In places the text is so nearly illegible that it can be deciphered only with difficulty, and the reading of a few letters is not certain' (p. xii). Meanwhile the text has become even less legible; see Duncan's remarks: 'I cannot make out anything before *can* in line 1, and cannot be sure of many other readings, especially from line 8 on, as the manuscript copy is now so faint' (p. 185). When examining the manuscript in the spring of 2004 I could only read the following text:

... i can wittes ful.wis of worldes blisse nabbe ic nout for a lafdi þet is pris
 of alle þet inbure goð seþen furst þe h.. was his iloken ī ...
 ic hole ne bliþe ... ne þriuinde ... lifð ...
 ... bliþe for to boe ned efter .. deað .. lð...

The text quoted is based on Brown's edition, with new punctuation and regularization of capitals. In line 1 Brown prints *fulewis*, which has to be understood as *ful iwis*; in line 8 Brown prints *priminde*, but the manuscript has clearly *þriuinde* (compare *thrivinge* in Duncan's regularized edition); the translation of line 13 follows Duncan. Different transcriptions are found in Dronke, 'On the Continuity', pp. 8–9, and in Theo Stemmler, 'Textologische Probleme mittelenglischer Dichtung', *Mannheimer Berichte*, 8 (1974), 245–48 (pp. 247–48). They read in line 1 *Ic am wittes*,

[Although I am certainly in the possession of my senses,
 I have no part in the joys of the world
 because of a lady who bears the price [is the finest]
 of all those who dwell in a lady's chamber.
 Ever since she has first become his,
 locked behind a castle wall of stone,
 I have certainly been neither healthy nor happy
 nor a thriving man.
 There is no one alive who encourages me
 to abide my time and be happy.
 I am forced to long for death,
 I can well say about myself:
 hard hangs this woe on me.]

The poem is metrically somewhat uneven, with partly impure rhymes (*me : boe*, *ston : mon*) and also with assonances instead of rhymes (*nout : god*).³⁸ Brown stresses that the poem should not be thought to be the work of an inexperienced rhymester nor to be an example of popular poetry. The latter conclusion is certainly correct, the former not entirely convincing. It is possible that the accidental form of its preservation in the margin of a manuscript page obscures the metrical regularity of the finished poem. The text exhibits dialectal traits of the South-west Midland area. On the basis of linguistic and palaeographic criteria, Brown dates the poem to the time shortly after 1200; from a purely linguistic point of view the poem could also be somewhat older.³⁹

While the content of the poem seems to be clear, at least in outline, the text nevertheless poses some problems. The poem's speaker is in love with a *lafdi*, who, however, has become another man's wife and is hence unattainable for the lover. He is inconsolable and longs for death. Does this poem express a personal experience, as Brown surmised, or are we in the presence of a conventional love poem?

ful iwis (Dronke; Stemmler reads *awis*), 'I am without the possession of my senses, certainly'. This reading, however, implies an emendation of clearly readable *i can* to *ic am*.

³⁸ In *nout* = *noht*, the /o/ is short, while it is long in *god*; *me* has long closed /e/ versus /æ/ in *boe* (as is probable on account of the dialectal traits of the text); *ston* has long open /o/ vs. *mon* with short open /o/. The rhyme pattern of the poem is a-b-a-b-a-c-a-c-d-d-e-d-e; most lines have four stresses. Brown speaks of a 'thirteen-line stanza of a known type' (p. xii); exact Middle English parallels, however, are difficult to find.

³⁹ *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. xii. Language and orthography are similar to other early Middle English texts from the South-west Midland area, such as for instance *Ancrene Wisse* (CCCC, MS 402); see *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. by J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers, with a glossary by Norman Davis, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1968), pp. 398–402.

If it is conventional, a familiarity with the courtly love lyric is presupposed, with the motifs of the love of a married woman and the lady's seclusion by a jealous husband (in Old Provençal, the *gilos*).⁴⁰

Linguistically three terms seem to point to the poem's interpretation as a conventional love lyric: *lafdi*, *pris*, and *bure*. The beloved is a high-ranking woman, a lady, who is highly esteemed — *pris* is suggestive of *pretz* 'value' in troubadour poetry — and she is associated with the intimate atmosphere of the lady's chamber (*bure*). These terms, however, are no more than hints. It is true that Middle English *pris*, a French loan-word, is etymologically related to Provençal *pretz*, but it is a frequently used polysemous lexeme in Middle English and hence no certain clue. A similar case is *bure*, which has a number of different meanings, partly inherited from Old English *būr*, among them 'a lady's chamber'. With this meaning it is current in both religious and secular lyrics. In one of the texts of the 'Harley Lyrics' (see below) the speaker announces in the first stanza, after an evocation of the flowering of nature in May: 'Y not non so freoli flour | ase ledies þat beþ bryht in bour.'⁴¹ In religious poetry the expression 'Christes bur' is repeatedly encountered as a designation of Mary as *genetrix Dei*.⁴² The poem's interpretation must therefore remain indeterminate; its 'conventional ring' cannot be definitely related to the courtly love lyric.⁴³

Fragments from an Early Chansonier: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G.22

More informative with regard to its cultural background than the previous poem is a text for which the melody also survives. It is thought to be the earliest Middle English song:

⁴⁰ For summary discussions of the conventions of courtly love in troubadour poetry, see Moshe Lazar, 'Fin'amor', in *A Handbook of the Troubadours*, ed. by F. R. P. Akehurst and Judith M. Davis (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 61–100; Linda Paterson, 'Fin'amor and the Development of the Courtly *canço*', in *The Troubadours: An Introduction*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 28–46.

⁴¹ 'I know of no such noble flower as ladies, bright in bower'; *IMEV*, no. 1504 (*incipit* 'In May hit murgeþ when hit dawes'); quoted from *Harley Lyrics*, ed. by Brook, p. 44 (no. 12).

⁴² See the *MED*, s.v. *bur*, sense 2b.

⁴³ The poem has been interpreted as a courtly poem by Theo Stemmler, 'Die englischen Liebesgedichte des MS. Harley 2253' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bonn, 1962), pp. 15–18; see also Dronke, 'On the Continuity', pp. 8–9.

[M]irie it is while sumer ilast,
 Wið fugheles song,
 Oc nu neched windes blast
 And w<e>der strong,
 5 Ej! ej! what þis nicht <is> long,
 And ich wid wel michel wrong
 Soregh and murne and <fast>.⁴⁴

[Merry it is, while summer lasts
 with the song of birds,
 but now the blowing wind approaches
 as well as inclement weather.
 Ey, ey, how long this night is,
 and I, with very great wrong,
 am grieving and mourning and fasting.]

This too is an enigmatic poem.⁴⁵ One might ask whether it is in fact a secular one. We hear of 'wrong' and of mourning and fasting. The collocation *mid wel michel wrong* is ambiguous: *wrong* can denote 'moral wrong', that is, 'sin', as is shown by the expression *mid (with) wrong* meaning 'in sin, in a sinful way' (*MED* s.v. *wrong* n. (2), sense 1d). As in Modern English, Middle English *wrong* can also mean 'injustice, wrong behaviour' (*MED* s.v. *wrong* n. (2), sense 2); a religious sense is hence not necessarily implied by this line. Perhaps the speaker has suffered from wrong rather than done wrong. As to his fasting, the word *fast* is not found in the manuscript; it is editorial. Theoretically another rhyme word would also be possible, for instance *wast* (from *wasten* 'to waste'), which could also be used intransitively in Middle English (but according to the *MED* with the earliest records only from the late fourteenth century). Middle English *fasten* points to a religious context, but not exclusively so. In the *Franklin's Tale*, when Dorigen has to be separated from

⁴⁴ The text has been newly transcribed from the manuscript; supplied letters or words are in pointed brackets; for further editorial conventions, see note 4 above. The poem is no. 2163 in the *IMEV*, and no. 2 in Page's list: Christopher Page, 'A Catalogue and Bibliography of English Song from its Beginnings to c. 1300', *Royal Music Association Research Chronicle*, 13 (1976), 67–83. For a facsimile, see Figure 18 below; see also *Early Bodleian Music: Sacred and Secular Songs together with Other MS. Compositions in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ranging from about AD 1185 to about AD 1505*, ed. by John Stainer, with an introduction by E. W. G. Nicholson, 2 vols (London, 1901), I, plate III. The text's dialect points to the East Midland area.

⁴⁵ The poem has been edited and interpreted several times; see *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. 14 (no. 7); *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. by Bennett and Smithers, p. 111; *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, pp. 121–22; Karl Reichl, 'The "Charms of Simplicity": Popular Strains in the Early Middle English Love Lyric', in *Individuality and Achievement in Middle English Poetry*, ed. by O. S. Pickering (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 39–58 (pp. 41–44).

her husband for two years, 'She moorneth, waketh, wayleth, fasteth, pleyneþ'. Fasting is here very much part of the symptoms of unhappiness in love.

The beginning of the poem can also be read in different ways. No doubt, the beauty of summer is contrasted with the *weder strong* and *windes blast* of the coming season: the speaker bemoans this change, with the long nights of autumn and winter approaching. This nature opening, however, fits into different contexts, one of them being that of a penitential poem such as is represented by one of the 'Harley Lyrics':

Wynter wakenþ al my care,
nou þis leues waxeþ bare;
ofte y sike ant mourne sare
when hit comeþ in my þoht
of þis worldes ioie hou hit geþ al to noht.⁴⁶

[Winter awakens all my cares,
now that these leaves are disappearing;
often I sigh and mourn bitterly
when I think
of how the joys of this world turn to nothing.]

On the other hand, an evocation of autumn or winter can also reflect the feelings of the speaker in a love lyric. An example of this is one of the early troubadour poems, a poem by Cercamon (fl. 1135–47):

Quant l'aura doussa s'amarzis
E'l fuelha chai de sul verjan
E l'auzelh chanjan lor latis,
Et ieu de sai sospir e chan
D'Amor que m te lassat e pres,
Qu'ieu anc no l'agui en poder.⁴⁷

[When the sweet air turns harsh
and the leaves fall from their branches
and the birds change their song,
then I groan and sing
of love, which has bound and taken me prisoner
and which I have never had in my possession.]

Here too the rough winds and the end of the birds' summer song give rise to the speaker's sighs and laments. Where does our poem belong, with the penitential lyric or the love song?

⁴⁶ *IMEV*, no. 4177; *Harley Lyrics*, ed. by Brook, p. 53 (no 17); this is the first of three stanzas.

⁴⁷ *Les Poésies de Cercamon*, ed. by Alfred Jeanroy, *Classiques Français du Moyen Âge*, 27 (Paris, 1922), p. 1.

The manuscript context might help to disambiguate this song. The poem is found on a fly-leaf of MS Rawlinson G.22. This manuscript is a Latin psalter that is dated to the late twelfth century and that comes most probably from Thorney Abbey, a Benedictine abbey in Cambridgeshire founded in 972.⁴⁸ In the twelfth century William of Malmesbury compared Thorney Abbey to paradise on account of its fertile gardens and plantations ('paradisi simulacrum, quod amenitate iam cælos ipsos imaginetur').⁴⁹ He furthermore notes that the monks of this abbey live in such seclusion that they think of women as freaks of nature.⁵⁰ In short, he calls the isle — for Thorney, like Ely, was at that time in the marshy fens — 'an abode of chastity, a community of good repute, and a school for godly philosophers'.⁵¹ The fly-leaf is dated to about 1225 and has on its recto side two French one-part songs, the second of which is continued on the verso and is followed by the English poem (Figures 17 and 18).⁵²

The fly-leaf has yellowed and has been damaged, so that not all letters and notes are clearly visible. The texts are written in two columns. The first of the two French poems begins with its line 6; the text (and melody) must therefore have begun on the previous verso page. The two French poems have more than one stanza; only for the first stanza is the melody given. The first French poem has four stanzas and an envoi of two lines. From the second stanza onward the text is written as prose, but in paragraphs corresponding to the stanzas. The same arrangement is true of the second French poem, which has five stanzas and begins about in the middle of the right column of the recto side. The melody with the text of the first

⁴⁸ See *Early Bodleian Music*, ed. by Stainer, I, pp. xi–xii (in Nicholson's introduction); see also the musical commentary in *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, pp. 297–98.

⁴⁹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, vol. I: *Texts and Translations*, ed. by Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 2007), p. 492. See also David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. I: *The Old Orders 1216–1340, the Friars 1216–1340, the Monasteries and their World* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 312.

⁵⁰ 'Femina ibi, si uisitur, monstro habetur, maribus aduenientibus quasi angelis plauditur' (When a woman is seen there she is taken for a monster; if males visit they are praised like angels). William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, ed. by Winterbottom, p. 494.

⁵¹ 'Vere dixerim insulam illam esse castitatis diuersorium, honestatis contubernium, diuinorum philosophorum gymnasium'. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, ed. by Winterbottom, p. 494.

⁵² This is Nicholson's date (in *Early Bodleian Music*, ed. by Stainer); Dobson and Harrison accept this date but note that according to the text's language a date between 1230 and 1240 might be preferable (*Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, p. 121).

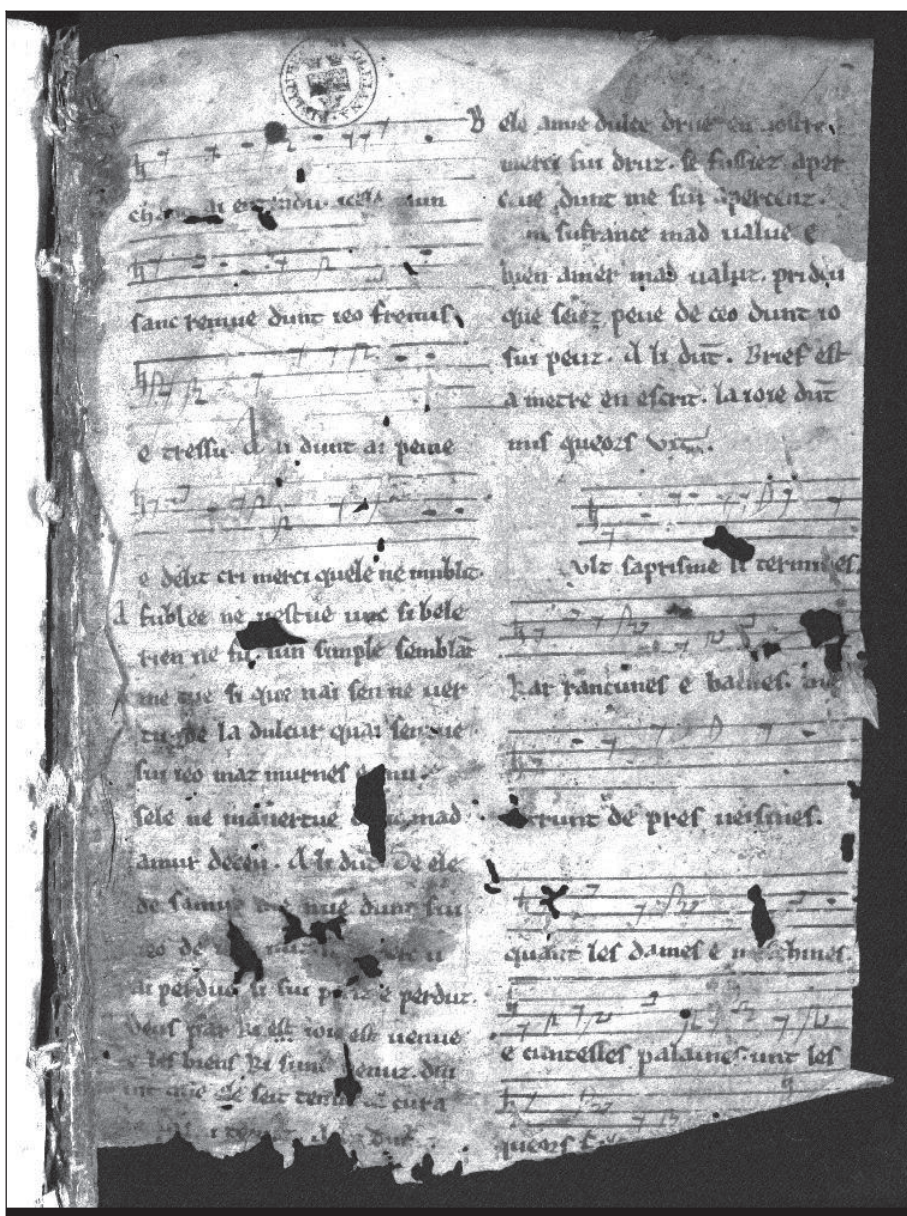


Figure 17. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G.22, fol. 1^r. Thirteenth century.
Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

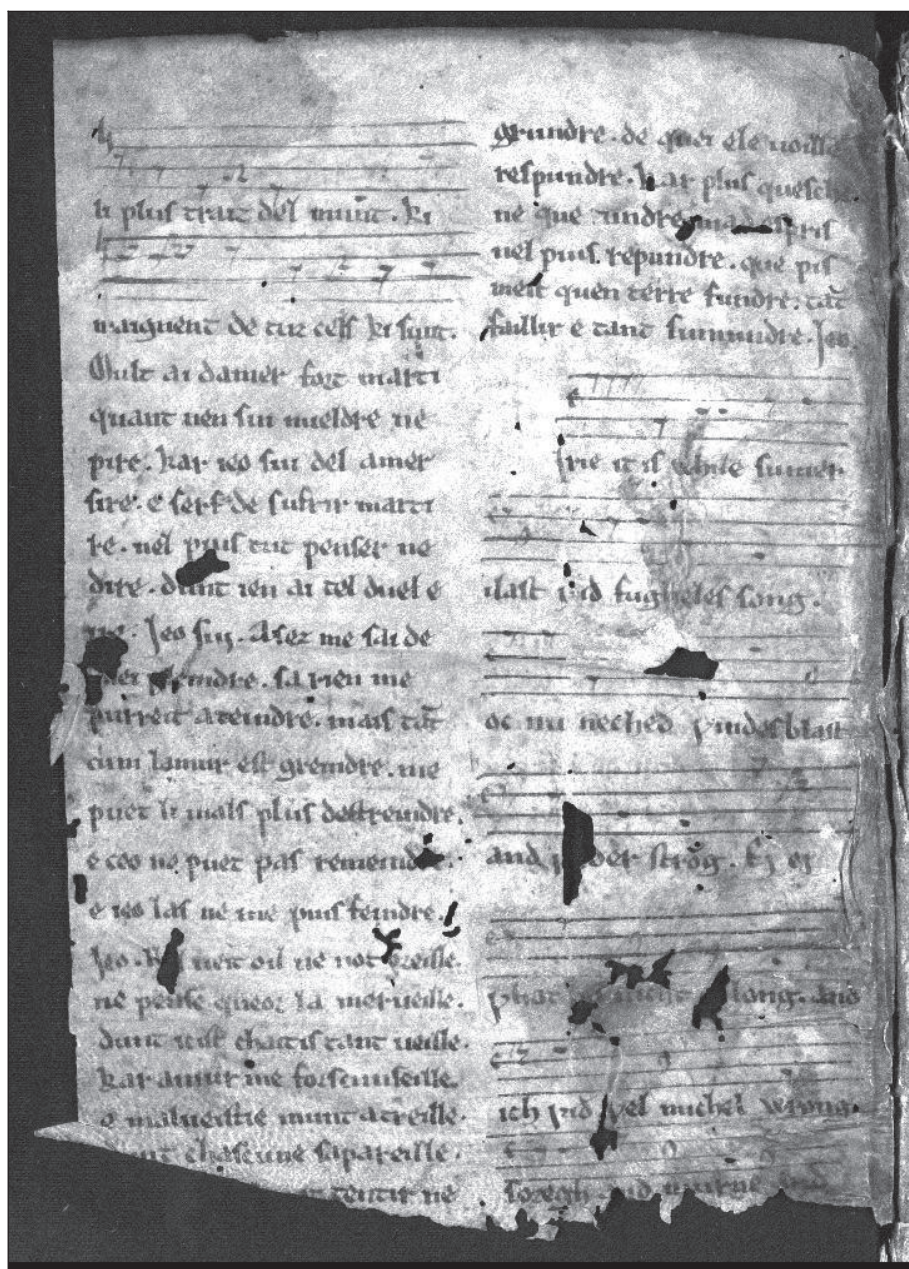


Figure 18. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson G.22, fol. 1v. Thirteenth century. Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

stanza as underlay is continued on the left-hand column of the verso side. The text ends in the upper third of the right column of the verso side. The seven lines of the English poem with its melody fill the rest of this column.

First, some comments on the French songs. Both poems are unique. They are both refrain-poems. The first song — with the acephalic beginning ‘chant ai entendu’ — is directed to a ‘bele amie, dulce drue’, whose beauty threatens to deprive the speaker of his mind and his life and whom he implores to grant him her love. The refrain summarizes his plea: ‘A li dunt ai peine e delit, | Cri merci qu’ele ne m’ublit’ (To the woman who gives me pain and delight | I cry for mercy that she does not forget me).⁵³ The second French song too is a love poem; it has the refrain ‘Jeo sui li plus traïz del munt | Ki maigne de tuz cils ki sunt’ (I am the most completely betrayed person of the world, | among all those alive).⁵⁴ The speaker expresses the pain and agony which unrequited love causes him:

Kar jeo sui de l’amer sire
 E serf de sufrir martire:
 Nel puis tut penser ne dire,
 Dunt j’en ai tel duel e ire.
 [Because I am sovereign in love
 and a slave suffering martyrdom
 I cannot think or declare everything
 that causes me such grief and disquiet.]

A consideration of the manuscript context of the French texts leads to several conclusions about the Middle English poem ‘Mirie it is while sumer ilast’. First, it is noteworthy how text and melody are arranged on the page. Writing out the melody for the first stanza only, arranging the text in stanza paragraphs, and disposing text and melody in two columns per page is typical of *trouvère* and *troubadour* manuscripts.⁵⁵ The melodies are generally written out in non-mensural notation,

⁵³ For the French texts of this folio, see Luciano Formisano, ‘Le Chansonnier Anglo-Français du MS. Rawlinson G.22 de la Bodléienne’, in *Anglo-Norman Anniversary Essays*, ed. by Ian Short, Anglo-Norman Text Society, Occasional Publications Series, 2 (London, 1993), pp. 135–47. The poem is no. 2063a in Raynaud and Spanke, *Bibliographie*, and no. 5 in Stevens, ‘Alphabetical Check-List’; the refrain is no. 100 in Nico H. J. van den Boogard, *Rondeaux et refrains du XII^e siècle au début du XIV^e*, Bibliothèque Française et Romane D, 3 (Paris, 1969).

⁵⁴ Raynaud and Spanke, *Bibliographie*, no. 1387; Stevens, ‘Alphabetical Check-List’, no. 13; van den Boogard, *Rondeaux et refrains*, no. 1134b.

⁵⁵ An example is the *Chansonnier de l’Arsenal* (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 5198, from the end of the thirteenth century). Manuscripts with only one column per page are also found; an

as they are here.⁵⁶ From all this it can be concluded that this is a leaf coming from a *chansonnier*. It is difficult to speculate on the size of this *chansonnier*; there must have been additional contents preceding the extant fly-leaf, but it is possible that the collection of songs comprised no more than a quire. Given the fact, however, that the notation of melodies was a special art, it is unlikely that a scribe should have tried his hand on a mere three songs.

As to the English poem, the French songs definitely suggest an interpretation of 'Mirie it is' as a secular love-song. The last line ('Soregh and murne and <fast>') is echoed by the first French song (*murne/murnes*):

De la dulçur qu'ai sentue
Sui jeo maz, murnes e mu.⁵⁷

[From the sweetness that I have felt
I am dejected, mournful, and mute.]

It seems very likely that the English poem comprised more than one stanza. As with the two French poems, the melody is given for the first stanza, while what might have followed would not have been notated. There is, of course, no denying that the song in its transmitted form can be interpreted as a complete and effective poem, but the odds are against the assumption that the text is complete.⁵⁸ In the absence of further stanzas, which might very well have disambiguated the text and suggested more clearly its interpretation as a love song, all further speculation must be futile. While it is true that this is a 'poem without a name', it does seem to me that it is a 'poem with a context'; in view of the fragmentary state of the remains of a *chansonnier*, this context, however, offers no certain proofs.⁵⁹

example is the *Chansonnier de St Germain* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fonds français 20050, from the second half of the thirteenth century).

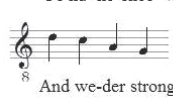



⁵⁶ 'The notation is non-mensural, neumatic verging towards the quadratic' (Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List', p. 5).

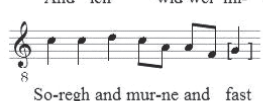

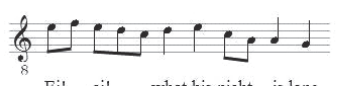
⁵⁷ See Formisano, 'Le Chansonnier', p. 143, n. 21.

⁵⁸ Compare the interpretation proposed by Edmund Reiss: 'The seven lines here may be but the first stanza of a much longer poem. I myself tend to doubt this possibility and view these lines as a complete and powerful poem. No matter whether there was more to it at one point, what we have now is meaningful and effective as it stands.' Edmund Reiss, *The Art of the Middle English Lyric: Essays in Criticism* (Athens, GA, 1972), p. 6.

⁵⁹ According to Bennett and Smithers, the last lines of the poem express 'stereotyped details of the medieval love plaint' (*Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. by Bennett and Smithers, p. 109). Both Jeffrey and Duncan, on the other hand, interpret the poem as a penitential lyric; see David L. Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln, NE, 1975), pp. 12–15, and

Despite the bad condition of the fly-leaf and the disappearance of individual notes, the melodic line as a whole is clear. As to the rhythm, different interpretations are possible in the case of non-mensural notation. The rhythmic interpretation of such melodies has long been one of the central problems of musicology. The method generally favoured by contemporary musicologists correlates the syllables and the corresponding notes or groups of notes without imposing any kind of beat or measure.⁶⁰





The melodies of the French songs are through-composed (ABC ...), independently of the rhyme scheme, and they end in every stanza with the refrain (XY), while the melodic structure of the Middle English song mirrors the rhyme scheme:

text	music
a	A
b	B
a	A
b	B
c	C
c	C
b	D

Thomas G. Duncan, 'Two Middle English Penitential Lyrics: Sound and Scansion', in *Late-Medieval Religious Texts and their Transmission*, ed. by Alistair J. Minnis (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 55–65.

⁶⁰ The following transcription is based on John Stevens, *The Old Sound and the New: An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 7. Stevens's position is fully discussed in his *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350* (Cambridge, 1986). A rhythmic interpretation with an imaginative accompanying part is given in *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, p. 241 (music), pp. 297–98 (musical commentary). For a discussion of the poem's metrics, see Duncan, 'Two Middle English Penitential Lyrics', pp. 59–63.

The melody is basically syllabic; occasionally there are two notes per syllable and in the second word of lines 5 and 6 three notes per syllable. The melodic line of each musical phrase stays generally within a fifth or sixth, with a descent to *g* at the end of each phrase. The melody can be characterized as uncomplicated and close to speech.⁶¹ Two things are notable with regard to this fragment: first, that both French and English songs are part of one and the same *chansonnier*; second, that this *chansonnier*, whatever its original size may have been, is one of the earliest French *chansonniers* in existence.⁶² There is no reason to assume different origins for the fly-leaf and the main manuscript. If the fly-leaf too was produced in Thorney Abbey, then it furnishes a suggestive commentary on William of Malmesbury's remark about the seclusion of the monks on their 'island' and their unworldly view of women.

Early Polyphony and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139

MS Douce 139 of the Bodleian Library has already been mentioned above in connection with the 'definition' of love in Latin, French, and English. MS Douce 139 consists of a number of different manuscripts that were collected into one codex already in the Middle Ages; its provenance from the Benedictine abbey of Coventry is well established.⁶³ The manuscript begins on fol. 1^r with a statute against bigamy; the first quire ends with fol. 5^v, but the legal texts (in Latin and partly in French) end on fol. 4^v; a new Latin text, a collection of forms of briefs (*incipit*

⁶¹ 'It is a telling little melody, and yet in relation to the words quite inconspicuous. The words themselves have something of the same easy quality; they are speech' (Stevens, *The Old Sound and the New*, p. 6).

⁶² See also Formisano, 'Le Chansonnier'. On the dates of the French *chansonniers*, see Alfred Jeanroy, *Bibliographie sommaire des chansonniers français du moyen âge (manuscrits et éditions)*, Classiques Français du Moyen Âge, 18 (Paris, 1918).

⁶³ On the composition of this manuscript, see *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, ed. by R. W. Hunt and others, 7 vols (Oxford, 1895–1953), IV, 534–35. The musical contents of the manuscript are described in *Manuscripts of Polyphonic Music 11th – Early 14th Century*, ed. by Gilbert Reaney, Répertoire International des Sources Musicales B, 4 (Munich, 1966), pp. 535–37. Reaney writes about the manuscript's provenance and date: 'A 13th–14th century parchment manuscript [...]. This miscellaneous collection is apparently from Coventry, though it contains the statutes of numerous towns. The dates mentioned in the ms are 1286–1307, 1303, 1332 and 1352, the former being *Homagia per diversos prioribus Coventrensibus facta*' (p. 535).

'Ewardus dei gratia etc. H. de C. salutem') begins on fol. 6^r. On the recto side of fol. 5 there is an English song, and on the back a dance melody. The fifth folio is clearly a leaf that remained empty and was later filled with texts. Pages left empty are also found in other parts of the codex; these are fols 153^v, 154^r, and 179^r. On fol. 179^v there is another song, a three-part French motet (see Figure 21 below). This piece too was apparently only written down because space was left to be filled. The 'definition' of love in Latin, French, and English is found together with other shorter texts (in Latin) on fol. 157^r (see Figure 16 above).

The two-part English song on fol. 5^r is the well-known lyric 'Fowles in the frith' (Figure 19):

Foweles in þe frith,
 þe fisses in þe flod,
 And I mon waxe wod.
 Sulch sorw I walke with
 for beste of bon and blod.⁶⁴

[The birds (are) in the woods,
 the fish in the water,
 and I must become crazy.
 I am living with such grief
 for the best of flesh and blood.]

The poem has six syllables per line; the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables and the number of stresses per line vary.⁶⁵ The rhyme pattern is a-b-b-a-b; alliteration is also found: lines 1 and 2 in *f*, lines 3 and 4 in *w*, and line 5 in *b*. The dialect of the poem is somewhat mixed; *mon* 'must' (from Old Norse) is mostly found in northern and north-eastern texts (also in the *Chester Plays*), while *fiss* (instead of *fish*) is mostly found in southern texts. The poem might have originated in the Southern Midland area. It evokes in few words the image of harmony in nature, which is contrasted with disharmony in the psychological state of the speaker. Despite — or perhaps because of — its simplicity and terseness the poem is one

⁶⁴ *IMEV*, no. 864; Page, 'Catalogue', no. 9; *of* in the last line has been inserted. The poem has been edited many times; see *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. 14 (no. 8); *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, pp. 142–43 (text). Facsimiles are found in *Early English Harmony from the 10th to the 15th Century*, ed. by H. E. Wooldridge and H. V. Hughes, 2 vols (London, 1897–1913), I, pl. 7; *Early Bodleian Music*, ed. by Stainer, pls VI ('Foweles'), VII (dance tune), VIII (motet). *Sulch* in line 4 is often erroneously transcribed as *Mulch*; see Carter Revard, "Sulch sorw I walke with": Line 4 of "Foweles in the frith", *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 25 (1978), 200.

⁶⁵ As is indicated by the melody, final *-e* of *beste* has to be elided.

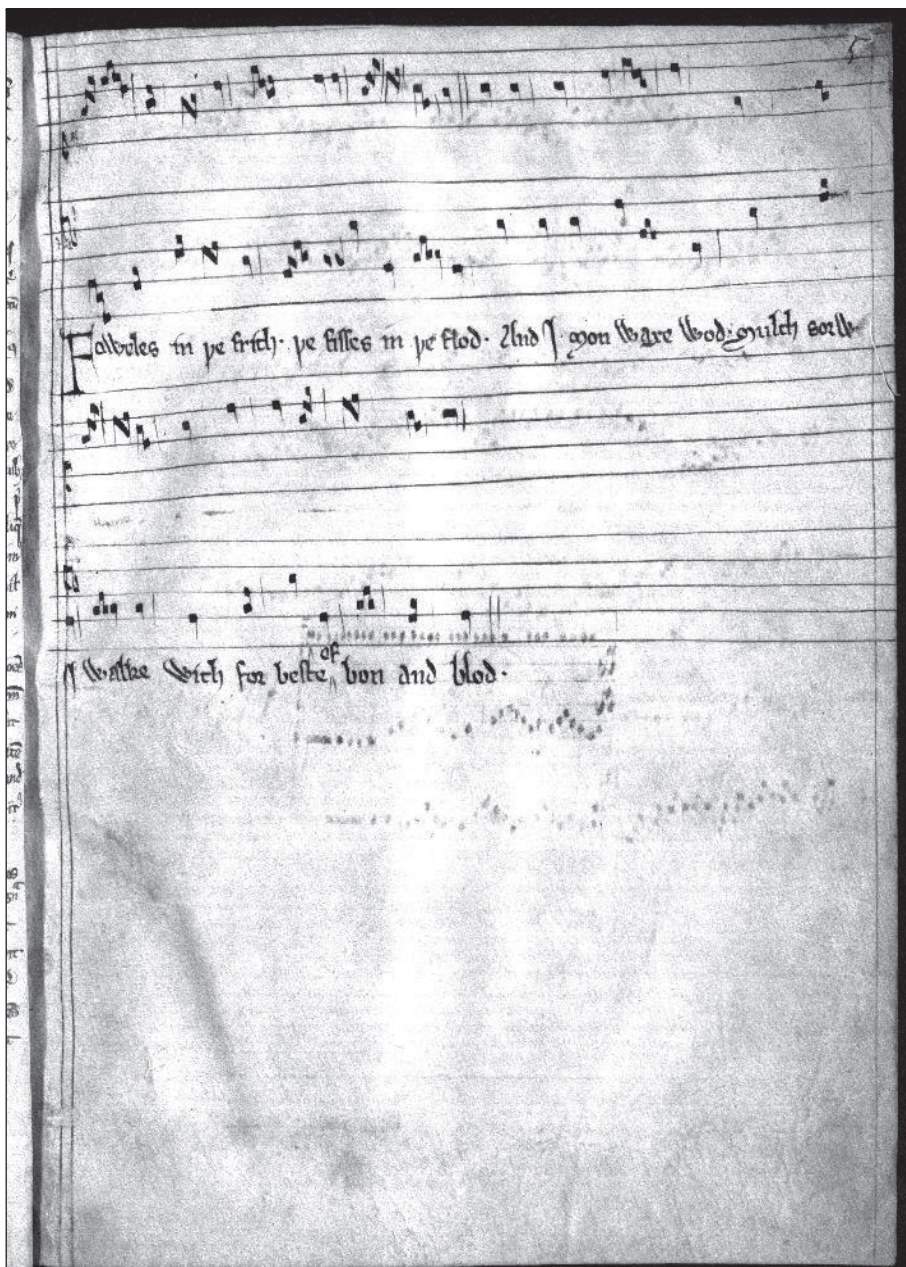


Figure 19. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139, fol. 5'. Thirteenth century.
Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

of the most evocative early Middle English lyrics.⁶⁶

'Fowles in þe frith' is the earliest two-part song in Middle English. Like 'Mirie it is', it is notated in non-mensural notation.⁶⁷

The syllables are sung to groups of two, three, four, or five notes. Occasionally, and only at the end of a line, a syllable is sung to only one note. This is particularly noticeable in line 3. The melodic lines of the two parts run parallel to each other, with various correspondences (one note in the bottom line corresponding to one note in the top line, also to two and to three notes; two notes to two notes, also to four notes; three notes to three notes, also to four and to five notes). This kind of parallel development is characteristic of the early *organum* ('note-against-note' style). The song is in the fifth mode (Lydian), with a b-flat as in f major. The two parts begin and end each line in unison; their parallel movement is mostly in thirds and sixths.

The predilection for thirds is typical of England. The major and minor third (*ditonus* and *semiditonus*) were generally

Fowe- les in þe frith

þe fis- ses in þe flod

And I mon wa- xe wod

Sulch sorw I wal- ke with

for best of bon and blod

⁶⁶ Despite its artless tone, critics have interpreted the poem as a highly sophisticated religious lyric; see Thomas C. Moser, Jr., "And I Mon Waxe Wod": The Middle English "Fowles in the Frith", *PMLA*, 102 (1987), 326–37.

⁶⁷ The transcription here is by John Stevens (unpublished). The vertical lines separate groups of notes from one another and are not meant to be bar lines. Rhythmically different transcriptions are found in *Early English Harmony*, ed. by Wooldridge and Hughes, II, 6–7; *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, p. 246; Dom Anselm Hughes, 'Music in Fixed Rhythm', in *Early Medieval Music up to 1300*, ed. by Hughes, New Oxford History of Music, 2 (London, 1954), pp. 311–52 (p. 343).

not considered consonances by medieval authors of music theory. Walter Odington (fl. 1298–1316) expresses this point succinctly: '[...] ditonus et semiditonus non sunt simphonie'.⁶⁸ The author known as 'Anonymous IV' explains that the third, in Britain, is particularly popular in the 'Westcuntre':

Tamen apud organistas optimos et prout in quibusdam terris sicut in Anglia in patria, quae dicitur Westcuntre, optimae concordantiae dicuntur [sc. ditonus et semiditonus], quoniam apud tales magis sunt in usu.⁶⁹

[[The major and minor third] are nevertheless considered the best consonances by the best 'organists' [composers of *organa*] and also in some countries like England, in a region called Westcuntre, because they are in frequent use there.]

Anonymous IV is certainly writing from experience. He was probably a Benedictine monk in Bury St Edmunds and had studied in Paris, possibly with Johannes de Garlandia (c. 1197–c. 1272). His treatise was completed around 1280.⁷⁰ Manfred Bukofzer considers the frequent use of thirds and the crossing of parts in two-part compositions characteristic traits of the English *gymel*. This term, however, has been recorded only since the fifteenth century, and its use for compositions of the thirteenth century is therefore problematic.⁷¹ Independent of terminology, however, 'Foweles in þe frith' is indubitably a representative of a special type of two-part song, for which also other examples can be found in thirteenth-century

⁶⁸ From *De speculatione musicæ; Scriptorum de medii aevi nova series*, ed. by Charles Edmond Henry de Coussemaker, 4 vols (Paris, 1864–76), I, 199.

⁶⁹ Fritz Reckow, *Der Musiktraktat des Anonymus 4*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft, 4 and 5, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1967), I, 78.

⁷⁰ Reckow, *Musiktraktat*, II, 21: 'Für wen aber sollte Anonymus 4 seinen Traktat verfaßt haben? Die Kenntnisse über den Verfasser und seinen Wirkensbereich sind zu gering, als daß diese Frage schlüssig beantwortet werden könnte. Aber wäre es nicht denkbar, daß der anonyme Mönch, vom Studium aus Paris zurückgekehrt, diesen *tractatus* für seine eigenen Schüler in der Abtei Bury St. Edmund's geschrieben hat?' (But for whom would Anonymous 4 have composed his treatise? We know too little about the author and his area of activity to answer this question conclusively. Is it not, however, conceivable that the anonymous monk, on his return from his studies in Paris, wrote this *tractatus* for his own pupils in the abbey of Bury St Edmunds?). The question whether the preference for imperfect consonances is a typically English phenomenon has been debated; see Richard Crocker, 'Polyphony in England in the Thirteenth Century', in *The Early Middle Ages to 1300*, ed. by Crocker and Hiley, pp. 679–720 (p. 689).

⁷¹ See Manfred Bukofzer, 'The Gymel, the Earliest Form of English Polyphony', *Music and Letters*, 16 (1935), 77–84.

England, such as the two religious Middle English songs 'Edi beo þu heuene quene' and 'Gabriel fram evene king'.⁷²

Anonymous IV is not only a witness of the predilection for thirds (and sixths) in medieval England; the main significance of his treatise lies in the information it provides about the Notre Dame school of polyphony, the *Magnus liber organi*, and the musical activity of Leonin and Perotin. He also documents England's close connection with the Continent and emphasizes that thirteenth-century England had a flourishing musical culture:

Boni cantores erant in Anglia et valde deliciose caneant sicut magister Iohannes Filius Dei, sicut Makeblite apud Wyncestriam et Blakesmit in curia domini regis Henrici ultimi.⁷³

[There were good singers in England, ones who sang very delightfully, such as Magister Johannes Filius Dei [Godson], Makeblite [Makeblithe] in Winchester, and Blakesmit [Blacksmith] at the court of the last King Henry (Henry III).]

Indications of the international character of English musical life are also found in the Douce manuscript. First there is the dance melody on fol. 5^v (Figure 20). The melody is monodic, but it branches out into three parts at the end. It is an instrumental piece in which each part is repeated. The piece is similar to the *estampie* and is generally considered an example of that musical genre.⁷⁴

The third music piece is found on fol. 179^v in the last part of the manuscript; the three-part song takes up the whole page and is written in English mensural notation (Figure 21).⁷⁵ This is a French motet that is also transmitted in three of

⁷² *IMEV*, no. 708 (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 59) and no. 888 (London, British Library, MS Arundel 248). For a discussion of early polyphony in England, see Gustave Reese, *Music in the Middle Ages, with an Introduction on the Music of Ancient Times* (New York, 1940), pp. 387–400; Hughes, 'Music in Fixed Rhythm', pp. 341–43; Crocker, 'Polyphony in England'.

⁷³ Reckow, *Musiktraktat*, I, 50; see also entries in the index of person, I, 95–102.

⁷⁴ See the transcriptions in Johannes Wolf, 'Die Tänze des Mittelalters: Eine Untersuchung des Wesens der ältesten Instrumentalmusik', *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 1 (1918), 10–42 (pp. 22–23); Jacques Handschin, 'Über Estampie und Sequenz, I/II', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 12 (1929–30), 1–20 and 13 (1930–31), 113–32. On the genre of the *estampie*, see Timothy J. McGee, 'Estampie', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. by Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn, 29 vols (London, 2001), VIII, 329–33; Christiane Schima, *Die Estampie: Untersuchungen anhand der überlieferten Denkmäler und zeugenössischer Erwähnungen* (Amsterdam, 1995). Reaney notes with reference to the notation of this dance: 'The musical notation of the English two-part song and the monodic dance is mainly in ligatures, but the sudden three-part coda at the end of the dance brings in rhombs' (*Manuscripts*, ed. by Reaney, p. 535).

⁷⁵ 'The motet is a well-known French work from *Mo* [= the 'Montpellier codex'], but it here uses English mensural notation with the rhomb taking the place of the breve. The English form of

the important manuscripts of the *ars antiqua*: Montpellier, Faculté de la Médecine, MS H 196 (the Montpellier Codex) (fols 283^v–284^v), Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, MS lit. 115 (fol. 32^v), and Turin, Biblioteca Reale, MS Vari 42 (fol. 24^r):

Triplum:

Au queer ay vn maus ke my destreynt souent.
 Amurs m'ou(n)t naufre d'un dart si cruelment,
 Ke joe ne purroye viuere llungement,
 Ki de ma dolor n'auoy aleggement.
 Kar ayet de moy merci, dame au cors gent,
 Ke ausi ey joe de *vus* joye,
 Cum joe *vus* aym de quer loyaument!

[I have a grief in my heart that troubles me frequently.
 Love has wounded me so cruelly with an arrow
 that I cannot live any longer
 if I get no relief from my pain.
 Therefore have pity on me, lady of graceful appearance,
 so that I may receive joy from you
 since I love you with a true heart!]

Motetus:

Ja ne mi repentiray de amer
 Pur maus mas ke jeo puse endurer.
 Ey, dame au vis cleer,
 Mout m'en plest vostre gent cors a remirer,
 Kar en *vus* sunt mis tut my pensers,
 Ne ja ne quer mun quer ouster.
 Si *vus* pri ke de moy *vus* voyle remembrer,
 Kar joe ne *vus* purroye vbblier.

[Never will I regret having loved,
 despite pain that is more than I can endure.
 O lady with the shining face,
 I am very pleased to contemplate your graceful figure
 for all my thoughts are directed to you,
 I never want to tear my heart away.
 I beg you to think of me
 for I could never forget you.]

the *conjunctura* is frequently used too. There are 9 brown five- or four-line staves per page. The placing of longs for breves and vice versa is not infrequent' (*Manuscripts*, ed. by Reaney, pp. 535–36).

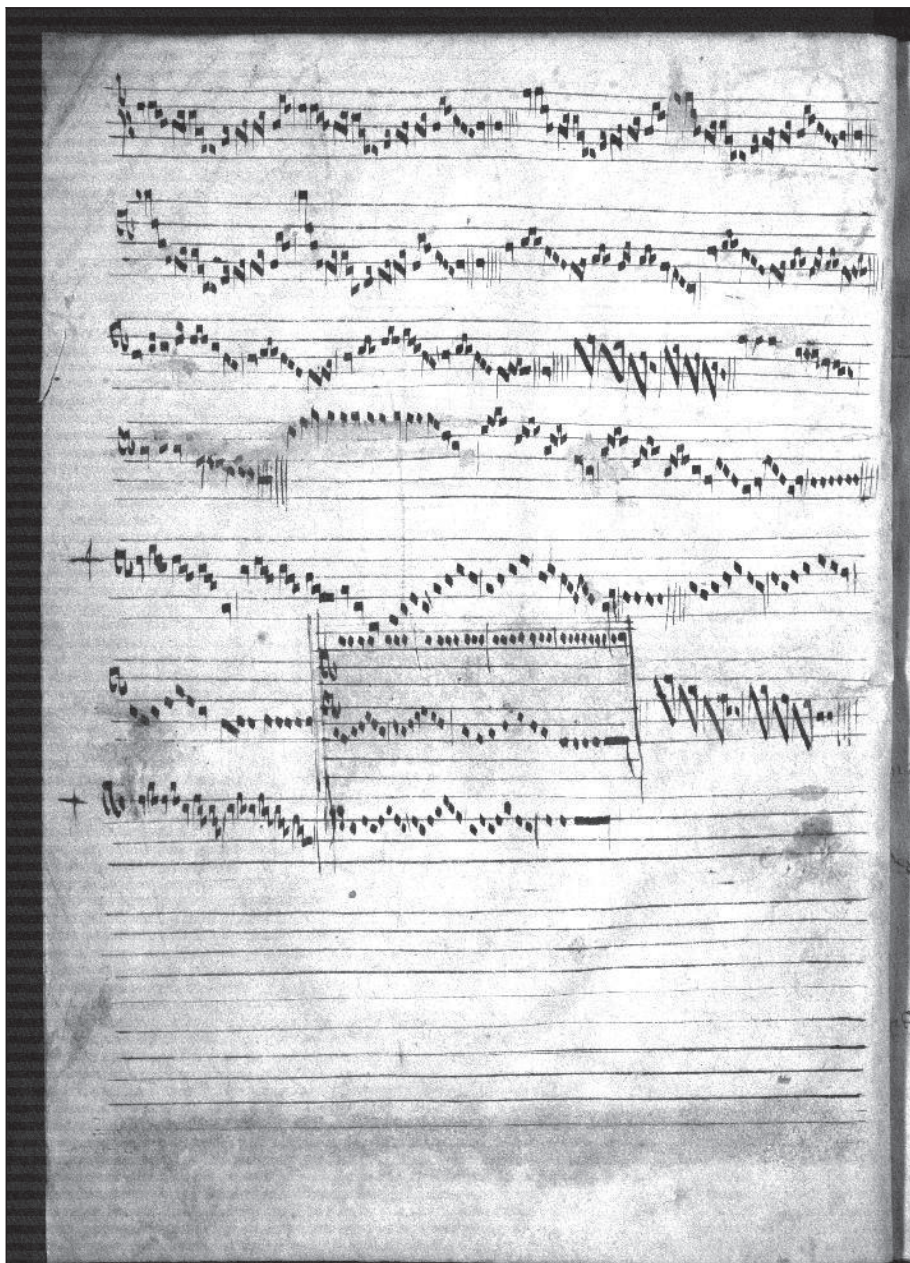


Figure 20. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139, fol. 5^v. Thirteenth century.
Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Au queer ay vn maus ke my destreigne souent. Amurs moit nantre don dant li tenebment.
 ke Joe ne purreye viure ungement s'ie ma volir nauy. aloggement har aget de moy n'et ame
 au c'ogent ke au si Joe de v'ioye tum Joe d'aym de quer loyament
 J'ane mi repentay deamer pur maus n'ist ke Joe pule endurir. E'j dame au vis cleer moit men
 plest vo'it gent eys a remier har en v'isunt mis eue my pensees ne ja ne quer mun quer oust
 li v'p' ke demoy v'voille remembier har Joe ne v'purreye vblar.
 Joliettement my recut li maus d'amer Joliettement. e'j t'el touce dame a li men suy done Jolier.
 t'antent en t'ant li maus d'amer Joe v'seruay de fin quer saunt saunt ben e loyament
 Joliettement my recut li maus d'amer Joliettement.

Figure 21. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 139, fol. 179r. Thirteenth century.
 Reproduced by permission of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Tenor:

Joliettement my teent li maus d'amer
 Joliettement.
 Ma tres douce dame
 A ki m'en sui done,
 — Joliettement qui teent li maus d'amer —
 Jeo *vus* seruiray
 De fin quer sauns fauser,
 Ben e loyaument.
 Joliettement my teent li maus d'amer
 Joliettement.⁷⁶

[Quite nicely I have been seized by love's pangs,
 quite nicely.
 My dearest lady,
 to whom I am completely devoted,
 — quite nicely I have been seized by love's pangs —
 I will serve you
 in courtly spirit without deceit,
 well and loyally.
 Quite nicely I have been seized by love's pangs,
 quite nicely.]

All three texts are love poems. The poem sung in the tenor voice is a rondeau, with a two-line refrain at the beginning and at the end and the first line of the refrain in the middle:

Joliettement my teent li maus d'amer
 Joliettement.

As is often the case with refrains, this refrain is also found outside this poem, for instance in Jacquesmart Gielee's *Renart le Nouvel* from the end of the thirteenth century.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ The Montpellier Codex (generally designated *Mo*) is edited in *Polyphonies du XIII^e siècle: le Manuscrit H 196 de la Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier*, ed. by Yvonne Rokseth, 4 vols (Paris, 1935–39). The text as given here has been newly transcribed from the manuscript, with slight editorial regularization (see note 4 above). Text and music from *Mo* are edited in *Polyphonies*, ed. by Rokseth, III, 97–98 (no. 260); this edition also contains a facsimile of the manuscript. The text in the Douce manuscript is in the Anglo-Norman dialect; the text in *Mo* is in many places smoother. Both texts have in line 2 of the *triplum* the plural form of the verb (*ount* or *ont*); the noun *amurs*, however, is in the singular. In line 2 of the *motetus* the text of *Mo* seems preferable: 'Pour mal que me conviegne endurer' (because of the grief that I must endure).

⁷⁷ See van den Boogaard, *Rondeaux et refrains*, no. 1166.

With this motet we have entered a musical world different from that of the poems looked at so far. The motet with its three different texts sung simultaneously poses special problems of interpretation. What is the relationship of the three texts to one another? Do they add up to a meaningful whole? Is the listener able to notice intertextual relationships? Are any of the three texts fully audible and understandable, or is the impression that the motet makes on the hearer one of a sequence of words or syllables without any coherent meaning? In this motet the texts do have a relationship to one another: they comment on various aspects of the speaker's love and in this way complement each other. It is to be expected that the three love poems in this motet were interwoven on account of their similar words and phrases, most of which are conventional, hence easily understood and appreciated by the audience. The refrain is by its repetition prominent; it was possibly known from other songs. This repetitive character of the tenor is also musically emphasized, since the same musical phrase is repeated again and again, as is typical of the early motet. This adds a drone-like character to the music.⁷⁸

Types of Manuscript Transmission

The transmission of most of the poems discussed so far can be characterized as 'marginal'. This is literally true of '[Pe]h þet hi can wittes ful iwis', written down in pencil in the upper margin of fol. 25^r of MS Royal 8.D.xiii. 'Marginal' in the wider sense is also the transmission of texts that have been filled into spaces left empty in the manuscript, on fly-leaves, or on the last page of a quire, sometimes only in the form of scribbles or *probae pennae*.

Marginal in this sense is the transmission of two Middle English pastourelles. One of them, a short refrain poem (probably more properly a *chanson de la mal-mariée*), '[Nou sprinkes] þe sprai' (IMEV, no. 360), is found in a legal manuscript from the end of the thirteenth century. This manuscript, London, Lincoln's Inn, MS Hale 135, contains as its main text *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, attributed to Henry de Bracton (c. 1210–68). The poem was written down in

⁷⁸ On the relationship of different texts to one another and to the music in the motet in general, see Christopher Page, *Discarding Images: Reflections on Music and Culture in Medieval France* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 99–111, and Mark Everist, *French Motets in the Thirteenth Century: Music, Poetry and Genre* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 148–80. The first motet in English (from the thirteenth century) is in two parts and is of a religious character: 'Worldes blisce haue god day' (IMEV, no. 4221; CCCC, MS 8). See Manfred Bukofzer, 'The First Motet with English Words', *Music and Letters*, 17 (1936), 225–33.

prose form on the back fly-leaf (fol. 137^v), together with a number of memoranda which were probably written by the same hand.⁷⁹ The transmission of this poem in a legal manuscript reminds us of the important collection of Italian lyrics from the last third of the thirteenth century in the *memoriali* (register of notary deeds) of Bologna — mostly secular poems with which the notaries filled spaces left empty in their files.⁸⁰ Due to similar circumstances is the preservation of the second pastourelle in London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 27 from the beginning of the fourteenth century ('As I stod on a day', *IMEV*, no. 371). It was written down together with other verses and scribbles at the end of the main text of the manuscript, the Anglo-Norman *Gui de Warewic*, on fol. 130^v. In the unpublished manuscript catalogue of the College of Arms it is noted that these verses show the same writing as the entry of an early owner of the manuscript, a certain Johannes de Haukeham, 'rector ecclesie de Flet' (rector of the church at Fleet).⁸¹

This marginal form of transmission entails that among Middle English lyrics there are some late discoveries. This is true of eight poems or fragments — all of a secular tenor and at least one of them a love poem — which were first published in 1992. They are found on the lower margins of fols 64^v to 68^v of London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 499, dating from c. 1270. This is a manuscript, mostly containing patristic and religious works, that also includes statutes and other documents having reference to the Cistercian abbey of Stanlaw (north of Chester). The same scribe who copied the Augustinian treatise *De Trinitate* also wrote the poems and fragments. These texts are interesting mostly from the point of view of metrics; they use alliteration to such an excessive extent that one gains the impression that they are meant to be tongue-twisters. An almost mannered use of alliteration is also characteristic of other Middle English poems, among them the

⁷⁹ On this manuscript, see N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, vol. I: *London* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 132–33; on the lyric, see Karl Reichl, 'Popular Poetry and Courtly Lyric: The Middle English Pastourelle', *REAL*, 5 (1987), 33–61 (pp. 35–41).

⁸⁰ 'Quale fosse lo scopo di queste trascrizioni è noto: riempire gli spazi lasciati bianchi nei registri, tra un atto e l'altro' (It is known what the aim of these transcriptions was: to fill the spaces left blank in the registers, between one deed and the next); *Crestomazia italiana dei primi secoli*, ed. by Ernesto Monaci, newly ed. by Felice Arese (Rome, 1955), p. 335. The lyrics are edited in *Rime dei Memoriali Bolognesi 1279–1300*, ed. by Sandro Orlando, Collezione di Poesia, 170 (Turin, 1981).

⁸¹ The poem is newly edited in Reichl, 'Popular Poetry and Courtly Lyric', pp. 42–43. The entry in the catalogue reads: 'The handwriting [of the poems] is probably that of an ancient possessor, whose name occurs at the back of the fly leaf, — Joh'ns de Haukeham Rector eccl'ie de Flet.'

Arundel pastourelle 'As I stod on a day' and a number of poems in the collection of the 'Harley Lyrics'.⁸²

Marginally transmitted texts are often fragmentary, but there are also, one might say, explicitly fragmentary texts. These are quotations in historiographical works such as 'Cnut's Song', some lines from a popular song in a sermon such as 'Atte wrastling my lemman i ches', or lines from the original song in the case of *contrafacta*. In none of these cases are the texts meant to be communicated *in toto*. Some of these 'explicitly fragmentary' secular poems are found in the *Red Book of Ossory*. The *Red Book* (so named on account of its crimson leather binding) is kept in the palace of the Bishop of Ossory in Kilkenny, Ireland. The manuscript preserves among numerous texts (including texts related to the diocese of Ossory) sixty Latin hymns which Richard Ledrede, bishop of Ossory from 1317 to 1360, composed as religious *contrafacta* of secular songs. Several of these hymns indicate the beginning or some lines of the secular song on which they are based.⁸³

It is in particular very short poems that are frequently transmitted 'marginally' or in a context in which they seem inappropriate or misplaced. The contents of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39 (James no. 323), for instance, are almost exclusively made up of religious or devotional texts, in English, French, and Latin. In the group of religious lyrics, the following poem is found (fol. 27^v):

Ic chule bere to wasscen doun i þe toun
þat was blac and þat was broun.

The manuscript context suggests an interpretation of this poem as a penitential lyric: 'I will go down to the town *to confession*, to wash what was black and what was brown (or dark).' The text immediately following these lines is a separate poem on repentance; the preceding text is a moral admonition. R. M. Wilson, however, proposed that these lines be understood as coming from a secular poem.⁸⁴ There is much to be said for this proposal. The lines seem to suggest the refrain of a

⁸² See O. S. Pickering, 'Newly Discovered Secular Lyrics from Later Thirteenth-Century Cheshire', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 43 (1992), 157–80. In the present context, poems E and G are of particular interest as they provide parallels of the lyrics discussed here; see Pickering, 'Newly Discovered Secular Lyrics', p. 177.

⁸³ For editions of the lyrics of the *Red Book of Ossory* (Kilkenny, Episcopal Palace, MS Liber Ruber), see *The Lyrics of the Red Book of Ossory*, ed. by Richard Leighton Greene, *Medium Ævum Monographs*, n.s., 5 (Oxford, 1974); *The Latin Poems of Richard Ledrede, O.F.M.*, ed. by Eric Colledge, *Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts*, 30 (Toronto, 1974); *The Latin Hymns of Richard Ledrede*, ed. by Theo Stemmler, *Poetria Mediaevalis*, 1 (Mannheim, 1975).

⁸⁴ Wilson, *Lost Literature*, p. 171.

woman's song, with the motif of the girl going down to the river to do the washing.⁸⁵ As a parallel, I would like to cite the beginning of an Old Portuguese-Galician *cantiga de amigo* composed by the Portuguese king and poet Dom Denis (1279–1325) in the traditional style of woman's songs:

Levantou-s' a velida,
levantou-s' alva
e vai lavar camisas
eno alto:
vai-las lavar alva.

[The fair girl arose,
she arose at dawn,
and she goes to wash her shirts
by the mountain stream:
she goes to wash them at dawn.]⁸⁶

In the parallelistic style typical of medieval Portuguese-Galician lyrics, the poem varies in the following five stanzas the image of the girl washing shirts in the river. The Middle English poem is too elusive to be pinned down. It is quite likely that in the manuscript context it was meant to be understood as a penitential poem, possibly for use in a sermon. The Trinity manuscript also contains a Latin sermon with one of the 'Bele Aelis' poems as its theme, in which *bele Aelis* is interpreted as the Virgin Mary.⁸⁷

Also of a fragmentary nature are the lyrics found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D.913. The poems in this manuscript are written on a single leaf that together with other fragments was collected into one manuscript. The leaf transmits the texts of twelve lyrics, ten in English, two in French. In some cases there are only single lines, in others it is unclear whether we have the complete poem. Particularly enigmatic is the lyric 'Maiden in the mor lay' (IMEV, no. 3891). This poem has given rise to numerous readings on the basis of parallels from

⁸⁵ IMEV, no. 1389.5; edited in Karl Reichl, *Religiöse Dichtung im englischen Hochmittelalter: Untersuchung und Edition der Handschrift B. 14. 39 des Trinity College in Cambridge*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur englischen Philologie, 1 (Munich, 1973), p. 313, with a discussion of the manuscript context.

⁸⁶ Text and translation quoted from *Medieval Galician-Portuguese Poetry: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Frede Jensen (New York, 1992), pp. 80–81; this poem is no. 569 in the *Cancioneiro da Biblioteca Nacional* and no. 172 in the *Cancioneiro da Vaticana*.

⁸⁷ Edited in Reichl, *Religiöse Dichtung*, pp. 379–88.

religious poetry as well as popular secular poetry.⁸⁸ Wilhelm Heuser, the first editor of the poems, was of the opinion that the leaf belonged to a minstrel's notes. Even if there is no need to invoke a minstrel here, there is no denying the popular character of these verses, which on account of their repetitions clearly point to their use as dance songs.⁸⁹

A special case of marginally transmitted lyrics is 'Bryd one brere' (*IMEV*, no. 521). This love song was written on the back of a papal bull (by Pope Innocent III, dated 1199) that refers to the Cluniac priory of St James near Exeter, where the document was kept during the Middle Ages (Cambridge, King's College, Muniment Roll 2 W.32). The lyric was written down later than the bull; its first editor, John Saltmarsh, dates it to c. 1325, but it was probably composed earlier — according to E. J. Dobson, c. 1275.⁹⁰ In this poem, one of the most beautiful Middle English love lyrics, the motifs of bird-song and love longing, the pains of love, and the joys of love are painted with light brush strokes and skilfully interwoven.

Early Middle English lyrics are transmitted not only marginally, but also centrally. In a number of cases the lyrics are an integral part of the manuscripts that contain them; they are no 'gap-fillers' but part of the corpus of texts chosen to be copied and written down. A clear representative of this type is London, British Library, MS Harley 2253. This is a manuscript miscellany, with Latin, French, and English texts, among the latter the largest collection of early Middle English secular lyrics, the 'Harley Lyrics'.⁹¹ The manuscript is dated to c. 1340 and belongs therefore to the end of the early Middle English period. A number of its texts, including lyrics, can, however, be proven to have been composed in the thirteenth century. The lyrics which are also found in thirteenth-century manuscripts are all religious, while the secular poems of MS Harley 2253 are unique. Some of the latter might

⁸⁸ For a discussion of the different interpretations, see Reichl, 'Charms of Simplicity', pp. 50–56.

⁸⁹ See Wilhelm Heuser, 'Fragmente von unbekannten Spielmannsliedern des 14. Jahrhunderts, aus MS. Rawl. D. 913', *Anglia*, 30 (1907), 173–79; Peter Dronke, 'The Rawlinson Lyrics', *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 8 (1961), 245–46; Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou, *I have a yongsuster': Popular Song and the Middle English Lyric* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 28–35.

⁹⁰ See John Saltmarsh, 'Two Medieval Love-Songs Set to Music', *Antiquaries Journal*, 15 (1935), 1–21; *Medieval English Song*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, pp. 183–88 (text and commentary), 269 (music), 305–06 (commentary on the music); a diplomatic text edition is found in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, ed. by Robbins, pp. 146–47 (no. 147); see also Page, 'Catalogue', no. 15. For a transcription of the music (by John Stevens), see Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (London, 1968), p. 240.

⁹¹ Among the manuscript's fifteen secular lyrics, there are about a dozen love lyrics.

belong to the beginning of the fourteenth century, but a number of them are most likely older. From the way the manuscript is laid out it is clear that it was planned as an anthology of different texts, among which lyrics were to have a place.⁹²

The same type of manuscript — with texts in Latin, French, and English — is represented by Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86. This manuscript is dated to the last quarter of the thirteenth century and is considered the ‘common-place book’ of a lay household.⁹³ Among the English lyrics in this manuscript only one is secular; like the trilingual poem discussed above, it is a ‘definition’ of love. The poem, with the *incipit* ‘Loue is sofft, loue is swet, loue is goed sware’ (*IMEV*, no. 2009), is entitled in the manuscript ‘Ci comence la manere quele amour est pur assaier’ (Here begins the manner in which love is to be experienced; fol. 200^r). The text is followed by a French poem in which carnal love is repudiated and the love of Christ is praised.⁹⁴ The definition of love in the Digby manuscript could be interpreted in a spiritual sense. Carleton Brown, in his edition, draws attention to similar definitions in religious poetry, in particular a poem associated with the fourteenth-century mystic Richard Rolle, ‘Lufe es lyf þat lastes ay, þar it in Criste es feste’ (Love is everlasting life, if grounded in Christ).⁹⁵

Lyrics found on fly-leaves are, of course, also centrally transmitted if the fly-leaves were originally part of larger units, quires or even manuscripts, as in the case of the songs in MS Rawlinson G.22. In a special category, finally, are poems that were written down with their music on spaces left empty. Here we are on the one hand in the presence of ‘gap-fillers’, but on the other hand these pieces of music are not hastily written down or even scribbled onto the page. They are rather the work of specialists, of scribes who were trained to copy music. The songs and the instrumental piece in MS Douce 139 are of this kind. The copying of a song for two voices or a triple motet implies a certain amount of planning on the part of the

⁹² For a facsimile edition, see *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*, ed. by N. R. Ker, EETS o.s., 255 (London, 1965); on the manuscript’s date and contents, see *Studies in the Harley Manuscript: The Scribes, Contents, and Social Contexts of British Library MS Harley 2253*, ed. by Susanna Fein (Kalamazoo, 2000).

⁹³ See *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, ed. by Judith Tschann and M. B. Parkes, EETS s.s., 16 (Oxford, 1996), p. xi (‘a layman’s common-place book’) and pp. xxxvi–xxxviii (date).

⁹⁴ Arthur Långfors, *Les Incipit des poèmes français antérieur au XVI^e siècle: répertoire bibliographique* (Paris, 1917), p. 75; *incipit*: ‘Couuard est ki amer ne ose’ (He is a coward who doesn’t dare to love); edited in *Anglo-Norman Lyric*, ed. by Jeffrey and Levy, pp. 268–71.

⁹⁵ See *English Lyric*, ed. by Brown, p. 209; the Digby poem (*IMEV*, no. 2009) is edited in Brown, pp. 107–08 (no. 53). Rolle’s poem is *IMEV*, no. 2007.

scribe; there must be sufficient space left on the page, and the pieces written down will have been copied from an exemplar rather than from memory like some of the popular lyrics 'in the margins'.

One of the important thirteenth-century English manuscripts with music is London, British Library, MS Harley 978. It preserves on fol. 11^v the best-known Middle English song, 'Sumer is icumen in', a song also known outside medievalist and English-speaking circles.⁹⁶ This song has been discussed and interpreted many times, in particular by musicologists. Apart from its form (it is a *rota*, which is performed like a canon), its date, and some textual problems, the relationship between the English and the Latin text ('Perspice christicola') has been controversially debated. The manuscript context has been described in detail by John Stevens and need not be reviewed here.⁹⁷ It should be noted that in the manuscript the *rota* is part of a collection of poems and songs in Latin and French (fols 2^v–13^v), which obviously represents an English repertoire of songs.⁹⁸ The manuscript is associated with the Benedictine abbey of Reading, but on account of the intellectual quality of the texts it has been argued that the manuscript might have been compiled in Oxford and was only later brought to Reading.⁹⁹ Of the music of 'Sumer is icumen in', Stevens gives the following succinct description:

In genre and style *Sumer* has much in common with dance-song. It occupies a single page and is well presented, though the appearance of the page is slightly marred by the activities of the notational reviser. Formally the song is a four-voice *rota* above a two-part *rondellus* (the *pes*). Both these types of polyphonic canon are found in English music of the period, but their combination here into a six-part piece is unique. In other respects, i.e. in rhythm and harmony, it has no surprises to offer; the original rhythms of the song are still disputed.

⁹⁶ *IMEV*, no. 3223; Page, 'Catalogue', no. 4; edited in *English Lyrics*, ed. by Brown, p. 13 (no. 6); *Medieval English Songs*, ed. by Dobson and Harrison, pp. 143–45 (text and commentary), 246–50 (music), 300 (commentary on the music).

⁹⁷ See John Stevens, "'Sumer is icumen in': A Neglected Context", in *Expedition nach der Wahrheit: Poems, Essays, and Papers in Honour of Theo Stemmler*, ed. by Stefan Horlacher and Marion Islinger (Heidelberg 1996), pp. 307–47; on the various interpretations of 'Sumer is icumen in', see the references in Stevens, nn. 2 and 34.

⁹⁸ In addition to 'Sumer is icumen in', the quire contains 'Samson dux fortissime' (lai, monodic), 'Regina clementie' (lai, monodic), 'Dum Maria credidit' (lai, monodic), 'Ave gloriosa virginum regina' (Philip the Chancellor, lai-sequence, monodic), three two-part melodies, then 'Ave gloriosa mater salvatoris' (conductus-motet, three voices, Latin-French), 'Felix sanctorum chorus eximius' (sequence, monodic), 'Eterni numinis mater et filia' (sequence, monodic), 'Ante thronum' (sequence, monodic), and 'Gaude salutata virgo' (sequence, monodic).

⁹⁹ Stevens, "'Sumer is icumen in'", p. 343.

The familiar English words in a popular realistic style (but quite unlike *folk-song*) are skilfully contrived; they are underlaid immediately beneath the stave. The Latin poem, appropriately celebrating the Heavenly Farmer tending his sick vine, is copied with care below the English text. The two syllabic patterns fit precisely, like all good contrafacts; but the relative priority of the texts has been a matter for dispute. Detailed directions for singing the song are given in Latin.¹⁰⁰

The Early Middle English Secular Lyrics and their Social Contexts

It is not surprising that the provenance of most of the manuscripts discussed here can be traced to religious establishments. MSS Royal 8.D.xiii and Harley 978 of the British Library and Rawlinson G.22 and Douce 139 of the Bodleian Library come from Benedictine monasteries; Cambridge, King's College, Muniment Roll 2 W.32 from a Cluniac priory; Lambeth MS 499 from a Cistercian monastery; Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39 and the *Red Book of Ossory* from Franciscan houses; and MS Arundel 27 from the possessions of a secular cleric. The religious establishments comprise cathedral churches (Worcester, Kilkenny), abbeys (Reading, Thorney, Chester), a priory (Exeter), and a rectory (Fleet in Lincolnshire). At least three manuscripts, however, can be traced to a secular background. MS Digby 86 is thought to have been compiled for a private household in the area of Worcester.¹⁰¹ MS Harley 2253 was probably commissioned by the Ludlow family of western England, possibly by Sir Lawrence Ludlow, a descendant of Fulk FitzWarin.¹⁰² As to MS Hale 135 of Lincoln's Inn, Neil Ker surmises that the poems in it were written down by a landowner of Lincolnshire, Alan de Thornton, who probably worked as lawyer for the Abbot of Ramsey.¹⁰³ The single leaf in MS Rawlinson D.913 of the Bodleian Library might have belonged to a minstrel, as

¹⁰⁰ Stevens, "Sumer is icumen in", p. 333. On the music of this *rota*, see especially Jacques Handschin, 'The Summer Canon and its Background', *Musica Disciplina*, 3 (1949), 55–94 and 5 (1951), 65–113; Crocker, 'Polyphony in England', pp. 712–14. On the question of the relationship between the English and the Latin text, see Wolfgang Obst, 'Sumer is icumen in: A Contrafactum?', *Music and Letters*, 64 (1983), 151–61, arguing for the precedence of the Latin text. R. Wibberley, "Svmer is icumen in", *Music and Letters*, 65 (1984), 322–23, argues for the precedence of the English text from a musicological point of view.

¹⁰¹ See *Facsimile of Oxford*, ed. by Tschann and Parkes, p. lvii; B. D. H. Miller, 'The Early History of Bodleian MS Digby 86', *Annuaire medievale*, 4 (1963), 26–56.

¹⁰² See Carter Revard, 'Scribe and Provenance', in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. by Fein, pp. 21–109.

¹⁰³ Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I, 132–33.

Wilhelm Heuser thought, but this is hardly provable. It is, of course, also possible that insertions like the fly-leaf in MS Rawlinson G.22 have a different origin than the rest of the manuscript.

As a rule these manuscripts contain only one or two secular poems in English. Only fragments are transmitted in the *Red Book of Ossory*; of a similar fragmentary nature are the poems in MSS Lambeth 499 and Rawlinson D.913. Only the manuscript of the 'Harley Lyrics' transmits with a dozen love poems a somewhat larger corpus of Middle English secular lyrics. The Middle English poems are in some manuscripts found in the company of French lyrics; moreover, they have been influenced by the *trouvère* lyric. This is evident in particular in the Middle English *pastourelles*, which were palpably composed in imitation of French models. Without doubt, the conventions and motifs of the courtly love lyric were known to the authors of the early Middle English lyrics, most noticeably to the author of the 'Harley Lyrics', but possibly also to that of the enigmatic poem '[Pe]h þet hi can wittes ful [i]wis' in MS Royal 8.D.xiii of the British Library. Despite the presence of these conventions and motifs, it is striking that the early Middle English lyric shows a predilection for a popular style. Many examples of this style can be found, even in poems that exhibit a virtuoso play with courtly motifs and conventions. Peter Dronke speaks appropriately of the 'underlying innocence' of the Middle English lyric.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, a number of lyrics show an acquaintance with the poetry of the *clerici vagantes*. This influence is best exemplified in a macaronic poem from among the Harley Lyrics, 'Dum ludis floribus', where the Parisian milieu of the 'wandering scholars' is explicitly indicated in the final lines:

Scripsi hec carmina in tabulis;
mon ostel est en mi la vile de Paris;
may y sugge namore, so wel me is;
3ef hi deqe for loue of hire, duel hit ys.¹⁰⁵

[I wrote these verses on tablets;
my lodgings are in the middle of Paris;
I can't say any more, so well I am feeling;
if I die for her love, it will be a shame.]

In the same manuscript there is the imitation of a *pastourelle* in the form of a debate between a *clericus* and a *puella*; here too we can observe the transposition

¹⁰⁴ Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵ *IMEV*, no. 694.5; *Harley Lyrics*, ed. by Brook, p. 55, no. 19; the manuscript has *scripsit*.

of the secular love lyric into the world of the *clerici vagantes*.¹⁰⁶ The almost pedantic application of the various *colores rhetorici* in some of the Harley poems — particularly striking in ‘The Fair Maid of Ribblesdale’ — is a further indication of this bent.¹⁰⁷ Leo Spitzer has established a connection between the *summa*-like cataloguing of physical and psychological characteristics in these poems and the scholastic method, a connection which also points to the milieu of the schools.¹⁰⁸ Despite their similarity to contemporary Continental love lyrics (French ones in particular), the early Middle English lyrics have their own physiognomy, exhibiting both the style of the *clerici vagantes* and the ‘underlying innocence’ of popular poetry. Like popular lyrics, they are anonymous; a poetic dialogue between individualistic and self-confident poets as in thirteenth-century Italy, for instance, is unthinkable for thirteenth-century England.

It is surprising that in such a small corpus of poems we also find texts transcribed with their music, such as the two one-part songs ‘Mirie it is’ and ‘Bryd on bere’, the two-part song ‘Foweles in þe frith’, and the *rota* ‘Sumer is icumen in’. The melodic structure of ‘Mirie it is’ (ABABCCD) mirrors its rhyme pattern and is typical of the Provençal *canço* and the French *chanson*: it consists of a *frons*, which is composed of two identical *pedes* (AB) and a *cauda* (CCD).¹⁰⁹ ‘Bryd on brere’ comprises three four-line stanzas, each of which is sung to the same melody. While the text has the rhyme-pattern ‘abab’, the melody has the structure ABCD, that is, it is through-composed. This is the musical form of the hymn. The melodic structure is also found in secular poems in the vernacular; Dante called this structure *oda continua*.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ ‘My deþ y loue, my lyf ich hate’ (I love my death, I hate my life), *IMEV*, no. 2236; *Harley Lyrics*, ed. by Brook, pp. 62–63, no. 24. For an interpretation of this lyric in the context of other debate poems in MS Harley 2253, see Karl Reichl, ‘Debate Verse’, in *Studies in the Harley Manuscript*, ed. by Fein, pp. 219–39.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Mosti ryden by Rybbesdale’ (If I could ride through Ribblesdale), *IMEV*, no. 2207; *Harley Lyrics*, ed. by Brook, pp. 37–39; see Mechthild Gretsch, ‘The Fair Maid of Ribblesdale: Text und Kommentar’, *Anglia*, 105 (1987), 285–341.

¹⁰⁸ See Leo Spitzer, ‘Explication de Texte Applied to Three Great Middle English Poems’, in his *Essays on English and American Literature* (Princeton, 1968), pp. 193–247 (pp. 200–14).

¹⁰⁹ See van der Werf, *Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères*, pp. 63–70; John Stevens, ‘Medieval Song’, in *The Early Middle Ages to 1300*, ed. by Crocker and Hiley, pp. 357–451 (pp. 368–73).

¹¹⁰ See Friedrich Gennrich, *Grundriss einer Formenlehre des mittelalterlichen Liedes als Grundlage einer musikalischen Formenlehre des Liedes* (Halle, 1932), pp. 232–40; Stevens, ‘Medieval Song’, pp. 373–81.

Musically 'Foweles in þe frith' too is an *oda continua*, set for two parts in the manner of the *gymel*.

The fact that numerous poems are found in manuscripts that contain several music pieces indicates the important position England holds in the European musical tradition of the Middle Ages, especially with reference to the development of polyphony. Gilbert Reaney has pointed out that, with reference to the number of extant manuscript sources, the polyphonic repertoire in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England was more comprehensive than anywhere on the Continent.¹¹¹ Centres of musical culture, in particular of *musica sacra*, were the great monasteries and cathedrals. The Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, in which Anonymous IV was active, was one of these centres. F. Ll. Harrison underlines the role of the Benedictine houses for the cultivation of polyphony in England:

The most active centres of the cultivation of polyphony until the mid-fourteenth century were undoubtedly the greater Benedictine abbeys. There are actual musical remains from Reading, Worcester and Bury St. Edmund's.¹¹²

Not only Anonymous IV lived in Bury St Edmunds; so too, around 1200, did Abbot Samson, made famous by the chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond. This abbot represents the ideal recipient of a poetic tradition which moves with ease between Latin, French, and English. Jocelin writes about Samson:

Homo erat eloquens, Gallice et Latine, magis rationi dicendorum quam ornatui uerborum innitens. Scripturam Anglice scriptam legere nouit elegantissime, et Anglice sermocinare solebat populo, set secundum linguam Norfolchie, ubi natus et nutritus erat.

[He was eloquent both in French and Latin, having regard rather to the sense of what he had to say than to ornaments of speech. He read English perfectly, and used to preach in English to the people, but in the speech of Norfolk, where he was born and bred.]¹¹³

Although there is strong evidence for a clerical context of early Middle English lyric and song, this does not, of course, rule out secular contexts. Anonymous IV names the court of Henry III as a musical centre, as we have seen. Polyphony presupposes a high degree of musical skills, whether with regard to composition and notation or with regard to performance. It was cultivated at first in monasteries and cathedral churches, then also in the Chapel Royal. Until the late fourteenth

¹¹¹ See Gilbert Reaney, 'Some Little-Known Sources of Medieval Polyphony in England', *Musica Disciplina*, 15 (1961), 15–26 (p. 15).

¹¹² F. Ll. Harrison, *Music in Medieval Britain*, 2nd edn (London, 1963), p. 113.

¹¹³ *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond Concerning the Acts of Samson, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Edmund*, ed. and trans. by H. E. Butler (London, 1949), p. 40 (Butler's translation).

century, the monasteries played an important role for the development of polyphony in the liturgy; it was only at the end of the fourteenth century that, as Margaret Bent has pointed out, 'the initiative in liturgical and musical development was passing to the secular foundations, to the cathedrals and the new collegiate churches and colleges, and, at the turn of the century, to the Royal Household Chapel'.¹¹⁴ An analysis of the provenance of somewhat over fifty manuscripts with an English polyphonic repertoire from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shows that no less than thirty-two come from English Benedictine houses.¹¹⁵ Monodic songs, on the other hand, were certainly more widely diffused. The manuscript of the 'Harley Lyrics' was probably commissioned by a noble family from western England; the fly-leaf in the Rawlinson manuscript is almost certainly part of a French-English *chansonniier*, one that might have been written in Thorney Abbey but that could also have originally belonged to an aristocratic household.

Among the Anglo-French monodic songs from the thirteenth century, two are indicative of the milieu in which they might have been performed. A song with the *incipit* 'S'onques nuls hoem par dure departie' (If ever any man through a hard farewell) is preserved in London, British Library, MS Harley 3775.¹¹⁶ This song is found in a number of trouvère *chansonniers*, in which it is attributed to different poets, among them to the Chastelain de Couci (end of twelfth/beginning of thirteenth century) and Thibaut de Champagne (1201–53). It is a crusaders' song and belongs first and foremost with the religious lyric. It is, however, the farewell of a crusader who, in the last stanza, only found in MS Harley 3775, accosts his 'douce dame':

Douce dame, vostre bel acointance
Me fet al quer si doucement plaier
Q'onc puis ne poeie ublier ne changer
Vostre valor qi de la mort m'avance.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Margaret Bent, 'The Transmission of English Music 1300–1500: Some Aspects of Repertory and Presentation', in *Studien zur Tradition in der Musik: Kurt von Fischer zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. by H. H. Eggebrecht and M. Lütolf (Munich, 1973), pp. 65–83 (pp. 73–74).

¹¹⁵ F. L. Harrison, 'English Church Music in the Fourteenth Century', in *Ars Nova and the Renaissance 1300–1540*, ed. by Anselm Hughes and Gerald Abraham, *New Oxford History of Music*, 3 (London, 1960), pp. 82–106 (p. 82).

¹¹⁶ Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List', no. 15; Raynaud and Spanke, *Bibliographie*, no. 1126.

¹¹⁷ *Chansons attribuées au Chastelain de Couci (fin du XII^e – début XIII^e siècle)*, ed. by Alain Lerond, *Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Rennes*, 7 (Paris, 1964), p. 182.

[Sweet lady, your beautiful company
wounds me so sweetly in the heart
that I could never forget or change
your worth, which saves me from death.]

Despite its religious inspiration, the poem clearly merges into a secular love poem at the end. In the London manuscript the song is written in a quire that is dedicated to the life of Felicias, the daughter of the Duke of Warwick. It is probable that this circumstance speaks for this song having a 'baronial milieu' in England.¹¹⁸

A second Anglo-French song of the thirteenth century which might give some intimation of the circles in which it was performed is clearly a love song. This poem has the *incipit* 'Si tost c'amis entant a ben amer' (As soon as a friend intends to love well); it is preserved on a single leaf in the Public Record Office in London.¹¹⁹ From the manuscript leaf it emerges that this song is a *chanson couronnée*, that is, a song which received the prize in the singers' competition of a *puy*.¹²⁰ At the end of the thirteenth century a *puy* was founded in London, that is, a kind of literary circle, like the *puys* of northern France, where citizens interested in poetry and song, merchants in particular, came together. It is fairly certain that the song 'Si tost c'amis entant a ben amer' is evidence of the activities of the London *puy*.¹²¹

Despite these indications, no clear picture of English society, in particular aristocratic society, as the recipient of courtly poetry and love lyric emerges. The scarcity of Anglo-French lyric poetry in this period, mentioned already, remains an enigma. The popular style of a number of the English lyrics suggests that their contexts of performance and reception must be sought in other than aristocratic circles; these poems and songs must have included a wider public. This popular style can also be observed in the music of almost all the songs extant from the early Middle English period, as Manfred Bukofzer has shown. Bukofzer's comments on the music are in agreement with what can be said about the tradition of the secular lyric in general: on the one hand, the manuscript findings point to the cultivation of music in church circles, while on the other hand there is evidence for the diffusion of secular and popular songs outside the circle of those able to write down text and music. As Bukofzer has pointed out,

¹¹⁸ Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List', p. 17.

¹¹⁹ London, Public Record Office, MS E 163/22/1/2; Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List', no. 14; Raynaud and Spanke, *Bibliographie*, no. 758a.

¹²⁰ See Stevens, 'Alphabetical Check-List', p. 15.

¹²¹ See A. F. Sutton, 'Merchants, Music and Social Harmony: The London Puy and its French and London Contexts, circa 1300', *London Journal*, 17 (1992), 1–17.

Most of the information about musical composition and a large part of the music that has survived from medieval times comes from ecclesiastical sources. This is natural because the art of reading and writing and of musical notation was a pursuit of the learned and was practised mainly in monastic centres and cathedral choirs. As the written documents deal mainly with matters directly concerning the church and worth being written down, it is inevitable that the preserved musical sources should give the impression that the church dominated all aspects of music. But this is not true of the musical life outside the church. Though very few pieces of popular and secular music have survived, we know of its existence from many casual and incidental references in chronicles and other non-musical documents. Some of these remarks are highly picturesque denunciations of secular songs and dance music, which by their strong wording prove that this kind of music was considered a formidable enemy, whose power over the laity and even the clergy should not be underestimated.¹²²

In summary, then, it can be said that there are many indications of a clerical milieu for the early Middle English secular lyric with respect to manuscript transmission, reception, and probably also composition. England, as an integral part of European musical culture, even plays an important role in the development of polyphony. There is no reason to doubt that for the diffusion of the lyrics, professional entertainers were required. It goes without saying that these minstrels would also have performed not just in ecclesiastical settings but also in aristocratic households and courts. The question whether these households and courts deployed their own literary life is difficult to answer. A courtly milieu for English and (Anglo-)French poetry in Britain before the second half of the fourteenth century is difficult to make out. It is only from the later Middle Ages in England that we have manuscript collections of courtly love lyrics, that poets are known by name, and that courtly circles for the cultivation of this art form can be identified.¹²³ For the earlier period our main sources are the manuscripts themselves and the clues they give us. The secular poems and songs of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries make a fairly small corpus; but, as I have tried to show, their significance is not congruent with their quantity: they are surprisingly varied and, in their interplay of text and music, courtly conventions and popular style, they offer a significant contribution to medieval lyric poetry and song.

¹²² Manfred Bukofzer, 'Popular and Secular Music in England (to c. 1470)', in *Ars Nova and the Renaissance*, ed. by Hughes and Abraham, pp. 107–33 (p. 107).

¹²³ See Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages*, Manuscript Studies, 1 (Woodbridge, 1985).

OLD ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS, THEIR SCRIBES, AND THEIR PUNCTUATION

Donald Scragg

This volume celebrates the work of a scholar who has not only spent much of his working life with Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, but one who has been instrumental in giving his fellow scholars all over the world a greater opportunity to work with manuscripts than would otherwise be the case. I am myself more fortunate than most in that the great majority of manuscripts containing Old English are within a day's ride from my home, but even I do not have the luxury of reaching them down from my shelves. Thanks to the Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile series, I can now see very many of them. No doubt the digitalization programmes of many of the holding libraries will ultimately make a number of the ASMMF fiches obsolete, but for the moment, they are the cheapest and fastest means of consulting these scribal records. No reproduction can ever replace live contact with the manuscripts for the textual scholar or palaeographer, but for those who need only a speedy confirmation of a reading, the appearance of a text on the page, or perhaps simply the scribe's punctuation (rarely reproduced in a modern edition),¹ the ASMMF series is invaluable. It will remain so for libraries with only a few relevant manuscripts,² as will the detailed introductions which

I am grateful to Mechthild Gretsche and Helmut Gneuss, who read a draft of this paper, for pointing out some gross errors. Responsibility for those that remain is of course mine.

¹ It has to be admitted, however, that whether a manuscript's punctuation is the work of the original scribe or that of a later reader can only be determined by examination of the manuscript itself, if then.

² See for example the fiches of manuscripts in the Low Countries in Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr, and Kees Dekker, *Manuscripts in the Low Countries*, ASMMF, 13 (Tempe, 2006). This should be read

accompany the fiches. So our thanks must go to Nick Doane for the foresight which has produced an enduring and invaluable set of reference works.

It cannot be emphasized too often that much may still be learned from careful perusal of manuscripts. Editions of texts are rarely concerned with the full range of items embodied in a single manuscript, and since many late Old English prose texts survive in more than one copy, it is unusual to find an editor devoting equal time and space to all of his or her manuscript sources. Facsimile editions, such as the magnificent Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile series, not only present clear images of the manuscript and the hands of its scribe(s), but their editors, in the best cases, have used the introduction to discuss scribal features and habits. The founders of the ASMMF series established guidelines for their editors whereby each manuscript is provided with a summary codicology and a bibliography, but further information regarding the text is necessarily limited. Because the second half of the twentieth century was very much concerned with providing scholars with sound editions of the basic tools of their trade, that is, the texts (particularly those prose texts which were previously available — if at all — only in nineteenth-century editions that were sometimes unreliable), subjects such as the layout of pages and the relationship of texts within a manuscript were often neglected. Although such matters are now being addressed, we still have a way to go. There is such a relatively large quantity of late Old English surviving — more English writing survives from the eleventh century than from any other century until the fourteenth — that there is great potential for the further investigation of the spread of literacy in the vernacular, of the habits of eleventh-century scribes, and even ultimately perhaps of their education.

This paper will be concerned with aspects of the habits of a small number of scribes during the Anglo-Saxon period and its aftermath. I wish to begin, however, with a simple illustration of the sort of information that may easily be obtained from idly turning the pages of a manuscript, including doing so virtually through use of an ASMMF facsimile. One of the earliest batches of fiches that the series produced was of psalter glosses, with an introduction by Phillip Pulsiano, then General Editor of the series.³ Among the most important glossed psalters of the Anglo-Saxon period is the Royal Psalter, London, British Library, MS Royal 2.B.v, included in this ASMMF collection. MS Royal 2.B.v is a manuscript which was

in conjunction with the review (of it and other volumes in the series) by Helmut Gneuss in *Anglia*, 126 (2008), 134–41.

³ Phillip Pulsiano, *Psalters I*, ASMMF, 2 (Tempe, 1994).

produced in the middle of the tenth century, with Latin text and English gloss written by the same scribe on pages that were ruled to take both. Over the years, more items were added by a variety of scribes on blank pages at the end of the manuscript, and the book now has an added quire at the beginning, written by scribes working a century later than the hand of the psalter. We know from some late additions to the manuscript and some scribbles on it that it was in Canterbury during the eleventh century, but there has long been controversy over its origin. Pulsiano put the manuscript in Winchester, as had Neil Ker more tentatively,⁴ but recent studies have discounted this view.⁵ The suggestion of a Winchester origin stems from the fact that the initial quire has a number of indications that it was written at Winchester,⁶ and it was assumed by some that this quire and the psalter manuscript were put together there before the move to Canterbury. But examination of the manuscript shows that on fol. 8^r there are signatures denoting sixteenth-century ownership, at the head of the page that of Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury from 1533 to 1556, who seized the book during the dissolution of the monasteries, and at the foot of the page that of Lord Lumley, who inherited Cranmer's library from his father-in-law, the Earl of Arundel.

Now why would any owner sign a book on the eighth folio? Certainly this is an ornate page, for it is the one on which the psalter begins. But one would expect that proof of ownership would be indicated earlier in the book. It is true that a sixteenth-century Lumley signature occurs again on fol. 1^r, but this is written by a secretary, not by the owner himself like the fol. 8 signature.⁷ John Lord Lumley (d. 1609) was an avid collector of books and manuscripts, and had his collection remained intact after his death, he would no doubt be seen today in the same light

⁴ N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), p. 320.

⁵ Doubts about the Winchester origin were raised long ago in *The Salisbury Psalter*, ed. by Kenneth Sisam and Celia Sisam, EETS o.s., 242 (London, 1959), pp. 53–54. For details of the history of the manuscript and of recent arguments about its origin, see my 'London, British Library, Royal 2 B.v, Christ Church, Canterbury, and the English Language in the Eleventh Century', in *Un tuo serto di fiori in man recando: Scritti in onore di Maria Amalia d'Aronco*, ed. by Patrizia Lendinara, vol. II (Udine, 2008), pp. 381–93.

⁶ Its first item, for example, is a Latin Office of the Virgin which mentions two saints, Machutus and Eadburga, who were particularly venerated at Nunnaminster and whose relics were possessed by the New Minster.

⁷ A further sign that the psalter did not have the initial quire during the Middle Ages is the Christ Church, Canterbury ownership mark 'r' at the head of fol. 8^r; see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 320.

as Archbishop Matthew Parker and Sir Robert Cotton. We know, moreover, that Lumley, like Cotton and Parker, was not averse to making up new books by putting together separate manuscripts. Given that there is a relationship between the last item of the first (independent) quire of MS Royal 2.B.v and the rest of the book, in that fol. 7^{r-v} (the last leaf of the first quire) contains an eleventh-century copy in Latin of the preface to the psalms, this might have been thought to be an appropriate introduction to the Royal Psalter text at any period. It is perfectly possible that Lumley, having Quire 1 as an independent quire in his collection (or possibly one which was part of a different book), attached it to the psalter which he had inherited as a book beginning with what is now fol. 8. It seems to me that we should regard MS Royal 2.B.v as having been two independent manuscripts until the sixteenth century unless it can be definitively proved otherwise.

I turn now to other, perhaps rather more complex instances of the use of the ASMMF series, and I should like to begin with two copies of Ælfric's *Grammar*, for some copies of which Nick Doane has himself recently produced a set of fiches.⁸ The *Grammar* is a text which is all too often, in my view, overlooked in Ælfric studies. There are more surviving copies of it than of any other Old English text, nineteen to be precise, and it is therefore not surprising that it is beyond a single editor to explore the minutiae of each version. The result is that some copies have been relatively neglected. London, British Library, MS Harley 3271, for example, is a large collection of grammatical and related texts in English and Latin, written in the first half of the eleventh century. Its main item, in terms of length, is Ælfric's *Grammar*, and Ker's *Catalogue* reports that this was written by two scribes in tandem, while the other twenty-two items 'are in a good many different hands nearly contemporary with one another and with the hands of [the copy of the *Grammar*]'.⁹ In terms of manuscript study, much more needs to be said, but fortunately we now have an admirably full account of the codicology and script of the whole manuscript by Sándor Chardonnens,¹⁰ appropriately amplifying and supporting Ker's all too brief summary. For despite the enormous value to all Anglo-Saxonists of Ker's work in describing the items and the codicology of each of the manuscripts

⁸ A. N. Doane, *Grammars; and Handlist of Manuscripts*, ASMMF, 15 (Tempe, 2007).

⁹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 311.

¹⁰ László Sándor Chardonnens, 'London, British Library, Harley 3271: The Composition and Structure of an Eleventh-Century Anglo-Saxon Miscellany', in *Form and Content of Instruction in Anglo-Saxon England in the Light of Contemporary Manuscript Evidence*, ed. by Patrizia Lendinara, Loredana Lazzari, and Maria Amalia d'Aronco, Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, Textes et Études du Moyen Âge, 39 (Turnhout, 2007), pp. 3–34.

that he includes in his *Catalogue*, it has to be admitted that his description of the scribes involved is frequently much less full and exact. As in the case of MS Harley 3271, there are many manuscript entries in which only a selection of scribes is included, either in terms of their handwriting or of the folios on which they appear. In a sense, the result of this neglect has been to disguise just what huge numbers of individual scribes there are whose work can be differentiated in the late Old English period, a point which I will return to at the end of this essay.

Another partial copy of the *Grammar* is now to be found split between London, British Library, MS Royal 12.G.xii, fols 2–9 and Oxford, All Souls College, MS 38, fols 1–12. In both cases the surviving fragments have been used as binding leaves of later manuscripts.¹¹ Although only twenty leaves of this copy survive, they are well worthy of consideration. The leaves are unusually large (written space 340 mm x 240 mm), yet each of them contains only nineteen lines, with the text written in double columns. The large bold writing suggests that this was an instructor's copy, and this assumption is given weight by the fact that, unusually in manuscripts containing Old English, the last line of a page is occasionally extended to allow the scribe to complete the sense-unit. This manuscript thus becomes another, potentially important, piece in the jigsaw of the study of the teaching of Latin grammar in the monastic schools. But it is not this aspect so much as an interesting letter-form to which I wish to draw particular attention. This beautifully executed manuscript is in two hands, the first having written fourteen of the surviving folios, the second having written the rest. Ælfric's *Grammar* of course is largely in Latin admixed with a high proportion of English words and phrases, the two languages often alternating word by word. Ker observes, however, that the two languages in this manuscript are 'carefully distinguished',¹² by which he means that the usual eleventh-century distinction of Latin written in Caroline script and English written in insular minuscule is regular. This implies a high degree of training in the scribes, commensurate with the production of what once must have been a very imposing manuscript. In the introduction to his *Catalogue*, Ker gives a useful survey of the letter-forms regularly used in insular script,¹³ at the end of which he adds some comments on ligatures, noting that in the late Anglo-Saxon period, insular minuscule had simple ligatures of *e* with a following letter and of two adjacent descenders only. He goes on: 'The ligatures used in Caroline minuscule for *st*,

¹¹ The manuscript can be seen in Doane, *Grammars*.

¹² Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 334.

¹³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, pp. xxv–xxxiii.

ct, **rt**, and **ra** [...] were not adopted for OE.¹⁴ However, Elaine Treharne has shown that the first two of these ligatures (for **st** and **ct**) were in use in the vernacular in the eleventh century,¹⁵ although, as far as I know, no one has shown the existence of the last of the four examples that Ker cites in an Old English text. But the second scribe of MS Royal 12.G.xii, writing in the middle of the eleventh century, does occasionally ligature **ra**, the six instances in which he does so all occurring in three pages (fols 3^r–4^r). Here, undoubtedly, he is influenced by his use of Caroline forms for the Latin, but that the ligature in the Royal manuscript is in insular minuscule is clear from the form of **r**: in Caroline script, the **r** has no descender,¹⁶ whereas in the English examples in Royal, the usual insular form of **r** with a long initial stroke is clear.

For a scribe involved in the lengthy task of copying the *Grammar*, where English and Latin are so woven together, such an overlap of forms is hardly surprising. It might not be worthy of note at all except that the same **ra** ligature does occur elsewhere in eleventh-century English. To introduce the scribe who used it, I need to digress a little. A generation or so after the production of the Royal/All Souls copy of the *Grammar*, a large volume of homilies was written, probably at Worcester but just possibly at nearby Evesham.¹⁷ Now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Hatton 113 and 114, this is a double volume written in its original form by a single scribe working in the third quarter of the eleventh century, one who also wrote a companion volume of ecclesiastical institutes, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 121. The Worcester scriptorium at this time was large, and a number of scribes added extra items to all three manuscripts.¹⁸ One of them, Ker's Scribe 2 of MSS Hatton 113/114, writes 'in an attractive and unusual hand' in Ker's words,¹⁹ adding both English and Latin material. First, he added a kalendar and

¹⁴ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. xxxii.

¹⁵ See Elaine Treharne, 'The Dates and Origins of Three Twelfth-Century Old English Manuscripts', in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and their Heritage*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine M. Treharne (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 227–53 (p. 230).

¹⁶ For an example of the Caroline ligature of **ra**, see Ker's *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, pl. III, line 7 *transcendere*, where **r** is ligatured to a horned **a**.

¹⁷ See the discussion and references in Rebecca Rushforth, *Saints in English Kalendars before AD 1100*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 117 (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 46.

¹⁸ One of the reasons for my assumption that this is a Worcester set is that so many scribes, many of them associated with Worcester, were involved in its production and in its subsequent annotation.

¹⁹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 399.

computus tables on an added quire at the beginning of MS Hatton 113, and he followed it with a table of contents of MSS Hatton 113/114 as it stood at that point.²⁰ Then he and two other scribes added three more items at the end of MS Hatton 114, without including them in the list of contents. The last item in Scribe 2's contents list is an abbreviated piece for All Saints (1 November) which ended seven lines from the foot of the recto of a quire. Ker's Scribe 2 used the vacant six lines and the verso of the leaf to begin a copy of a late piece by Ælfric (composed, as will be shown later, after 1006), and in order to complete it he added a new eight-leaf quire. This is a piece for a confessor bishop (Assmann IV).²¹ But leaves 6 and 7 of this quire are now missing, and the end of his item is now lost. The last leaf of the quire contains Ælfric's homily for the dedication of a church (Brotanek I),²² but this too is defective because it lacks its opening, written no doubt on the now missing leaves 6 and 7. It may be that our Scribe 2 began this item also and then directed another scribe to finish it, because when it ends in the middle of the next quire, we find Scribe 2 beginning another item immediately afterwards, this time an unpublished composite homily (also for the dedication of a church).²³ Scribe 2 failed to complete this item, but he handed it over for the final page (fol. 246^v) to be copied by a Worcester scribe whose work is to be found in many manuscripts and documents and who is known to us as Hemming.²⁴

²⁰ For full details and analysis of the contents of this quire, see Rushforth, *Saints in English Kalendars*, pp. 46–48.

²¹ *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, ed. by Bruno Assmann, Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Prosa, 3 (Kassel, 1889), reissued with a supplementary introduction by Peter Clemoes (Darmstadt, 1964).

²² *Texte und Untersuchungen zur ae Literatur und Kirchengeschichte*, ed. by Rudolf Brotanek (Halle, 1913). This edition has now been superseded by Birgit Ebersperger, *Die angelsächsischen Handschriften in den Pariser Bibliotheken mit einer Edition von Ælfrics Kirchweihhomilie aus der Handschrift Paris, BN, lat. 943*, Anglistische Forschungen, 261 (Heidelberg, 1999).

²³ See Franz Wenisch, 'The Anonymous Old English Homily for the Dedication of a Church in MS Hatton 114 (HomS 51): An Annotated Edition', in *Anglo-Saxonica: Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der englische Sprache und zur altenglische Literatur. Festschrift für Hans Schabram zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Klaus R. Grinda and Claus-Dieter Wetzel (Munich, 1993), pp. 1–19. On the possibility that Scribe 2 was directing the copying here, cf. other signs in MSS Hatton 113/114 + Junius 121 of a significant scribe directing more junior colleagues. See my 'A Late Old English Harrowing of Hell Homily from Worcester and Blickling Homily VII', in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols (Toronto, 2005), II, 197–211.

²⁴ For an example of Hemming being involved in multiple copying, see my essay cited in the previous footnote.

Scribe 2 is known from other manuscripts too. In the margin of MS Junius 121, the companion volume to MSS Hatton 113/114, he added, in English, appropriate text in the margin of fol. 120^v where the main scribe had missed item six in listing the Ten Commandments. This then is no ordinary and mechanical copyist, but someone who read the three manuscripts with care. He also copied fols 9^r–13^{ra} of CCCC, MS 9, the copy of the so-called Cotton-Corpus legendary which gives that collection its popular name and which was used, in an earlier form, by Ælfric to create his *Lives of Saints* series. The significance of this scribe for our purposes is that in both of his English items in MS Hatton 114, he, like the second scribe of MS Royal 12.G.xii, occasionally uses the **ra** ligature, again the insular variety with a descender on the **r**. Treharne has already shown that in some instances of the use of ligatures in eleventh-century English, Ker, most unusually, is wrong. On the basis of these two scribes working at a different date and (probably) writing in different places, we can now add the information that another of the ligatures used in Caroline minuscule was occasionally adopted for English in the eleventh century.

It is worth pursuing features of the work of MS Hatton 114's Scribe 2 a little further, and for this I note first that he uses the *punctus interrogativus*. Scribes writing Old English used four marks of punctuation. In the early period, they confined themselves to the point or dot, written usually level with the middle of the letters but also sometimes on the writing line as we would today. At the end of the tenth century, other marks which were used earlier only in Latin texts started to appear in English, particularly in manuscripts associated with Ælfric's homilies. These represented heavier syntactic or rhetorical pauses.²⁵ They are the *punctus versus*, sometimes referred to as the 'semi-colon', the *punctus elevatus* or (inaccurately) the 'reversed semi-colon', and the *punctus interrogativus* after direct questions. The *versus* (but not the *elevatus* or the *interrogativus*) occurs occasionally in the Vercelli homilies, most frequently in those homilies which I consider to have been composed closest in time to the point when the Vercelli Book itself was written (probably the 970s), specifically homilies IV and XIX–XXI. But the earliest manuscripts in which the full range of all four marks occurs are the two copies of Ælfric's First and Second Series homilies most closely associated with his own scriptorium at Cerne Abbas. These are London, British Library, MS Royal 7.C.xii

²⁵ See Peter Clemoes, *Liturgical Influence on Punctuation in Late Old English and Early Middle English Manuscripts*, Department of Anglo-Saxon Occasional Papers, 1 (Cambridge, 1952), and C. G. Harlow, 'Punctuation in Some Manuscripts of Ælfric', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 10 (1959), 1–19.

and CUL, MS Gg.3.28,²⁶ both written in the early 990s. In the early part of the eleventh century, the punctuation marks found in these manuscripts were often copied along with the text itself from one manuscript to another; for example, the same marks are found in Ælfric items at the same point in the text in the closely related copies Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 340/342, CCCC, MS 198,²⁷ and CCCC, MS 162.²⁸ But while some scribes, particularly early ones copying Ælfric homilies, repeated the *interrogativus* from one manuscript to another along with other detailed aspects of the text,²⁹ others varied in their attitude to all three marks, some avoiding the *elevatus* altogether or using it rarely, and few using the *interrogativus* at all. As transmission lines became longer, the *interrogativus* appears to have been ever more frequently lost, even in Ælfric texts, perhaps because many scribes either thought it unnecessary or simply didn't recognize it. I take as an example Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 115, which is a relatively late collection of Ælfric pieces drawn from the First and Second Series, from the *Lives of Saints*, and from later homilies printed by John Pope,³⁰ and containing also copies of the *Hexameron* and minor items like the Letter to Brother Edward and Napier 7/8, all of which are now attributed to Ælfric.³¹ This variety suggests that ultimately the items must have been brought together from different sources, and they were almost certainly assembled into the present collection by the present

²⁶ For confirmation that these were written at Cerne Abbas, see Peter Clemoes's 'Introduction' to *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes, EETS s.s., 17 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 1 and 147, but also see the discussion by John Pope in the work cited in note 30 below.

²⁷ On the relationship between MSS Bodley 340/342 and CCCC 198, see Kenneth Sisam, 'MSS. Bodley 340 and 342: Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', in his *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 148–98.

²⁸ On the relationship of CCCC 162 with MSS Bodley 340/342 and CCCC 198, see the introduction to my edition of *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, EETS o.s., 300 (Oxford, 1992).

²⁹ For comments on the accuracy of copying in early Ælfric manuscripts, see my 'Ælfric's Scribes', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 37 (2006), 179–89.

³⁰ *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. by John C. Pope, EETS o.s., 259–60, 2 vols (London, 1967–68).

³¹ For Napier 7/8, see *Wulfstan: Sammlung der ihm zugeschriebenen Homilien nebst Untersuchungen über ihre Echtheit*, ed. by Arthur Napier, repr. with a bibliographical appendix by Klaus Osthöfen (1883, repr. Dublin, 1967). For the Letter to Brother Edward, see Mary Clayton, 'An Edition of Ælfric's Letter to Brother Edward', in *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser (Tempe, 2002), pp. 263–83.

scribe.³² He points the texts throughout and frequently uses the *versus* and the *elevatus*, but there is no example of the *interrogativus* (despite the occurrence of many direct questions in the text) until on fol. 97^r three examples suddenly occur in nine lines. There can be little doubt that these marks are taken from his copy-text. The scribe himself, then, was not averse to using the *interrogativus* but somewhere in the line of transmission it has been lost from the majority of items. This is just one of many manuscripts in which the *interrogativus* is either rare or missing altogether. Its occurrence in the work of MS Hatton 114 Scribe 2 is therefore worthy of note.

The *punctus interrogativus* is the poor relation not only among scribes but also among commentators. Ker has a summary of the punctuation of manuscripts containing Old English at the beginning of his *Catalogue* but omits any reference to the *interrogativus*.³³ Furthermore, in the same year that this major reference work was published, Geoffrey Harlow produced a detailed study of the punctuation of seven Ælfric homilies in six manuscripts.³⁴ In this he showed the way in which punctuation was copied from one manuscript to another over some generations. Still, while acknowledging the existence of the *interrogativus*, he nonetheless excluded it from his study without explanation.³⁵ Harlow presumes that the punctuation in the *Catholic Homilies* is that of Ælfric himself, and it certainly goes back to Ælfric's own scriptorium at Cerne Abbas since it is found in MS Royal 7.C.xii, which originated there and which has Ælfric's annotations in the margins.³⁶ The *interrogativus* in that manuscript is found in the work of both of the main scribes. Other marks of punctuation used in that manuscript are also used by Ælfric in his annotations, although it happens that Ælfric himself had no reason to use the *interrogativus* in the few sentences that he himself wrote. It is a reasonable assumption then that the punctuation in many Ælfric manuscripts, and this includes examples of the *interrogativus*, goes back to the author. It is interesting to speculate

³² For a detailed analysis of the collection, see my 'An Unpublished Vernacular Exhortation from Post-Conquest England and its Manuscript Context', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. by Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson, King's College London Medieval Series, 17 (London, 2000), pp. 511–24.

³³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, pp. xxxiii–xxxv.

³⁴ Harlow, 'Punctuation in Some Manuscripts'.

³⁵ Cf. Harlow, 'Punctuation in Some Manuscripts', p. 2 n. 5: 'A fourth [mark of punctuation], the *punctus interrogativus*, is not considered here; it occurs sporadically after direct questions.'

³⁶ See *Ælfric's First Series of Catholic Homilies: British Museum Royal 7 C. xii, fols. 4–218*, ed. by Norman Eliason and Peter Clemoes, EEMF, 13 (Copenhagen, 1966).

on the source of the punctuation used by the scribe of Assmann IV in MS Hatton 114. Does his punctuation, including the *interrogativus*, go back to Ælfric, despite the fact that he was writing at about the time of the Norman Conquest? Harlow's study is of punctuation in Ælfric homilies in copies close to Ælfric's own day. The latest manuscripts that he included are dated by Ker 'xi¹', in other words, about the middle of the first half of the eleventh century. If we assume that Ælfric lived until about 1010, these copies were made within a quarter of a century of his death. But the copy of Assmann IV in MS Hatton 114 was written by a scribe who was certainly working on this manuscript after 1062,³⁷ which means that if the punctuation is basically Ælfric's, it survived intact for half a century at least.

In order to test this theory, I decided to extend Harlow's analysis to Assmann IV. Six complete copies of the homily (*DOE* corpus designation 'ÆHomM 11') survive. Two of them, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 116 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343, are too late to be of interest here (both are of the twelfth century). A third, London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D XVII, was much damaged in the Cotton fire, and a fourth was once in MS Hatton 115 but is there no longer.³⁸ I have therefore confined the following study of the punctuation of the homily to MSS Hatton 114, CCCC 178, and CCCC 188, and quote just the first few sentences (eight sense units in the *Dictionary of Old English* transcript). For simplicity, since the copying of punctuation marks is my topic rather than, as in Harlow's case, the reasons for the use of the various punctuation marks, I have ignored larger letters, capitalization, and manuscript decoration (colour, for example) which may also in some manuscripts indicate syntactic or rhetorical breaks in the text, and I have also expanded common abbreviations.

CCCC 188, p. 451: Matheus se godspellere us sæde on ðysum godspelle þæt ure hælend crist ða ða he her on life was on soðre menniscnyse betwux mannum wunigende . þæt he gewarnode his apostolas þysum wordum and cwæþ ; Uigilate ergo quia nescitis qua hora dominus uester uenturus sit ; waciað eornostlice forþanðe ge nyton on hwylcere tide eower drihten cume ; wite ge þæt to soðan . þæt se hiredes ealdor wacian wolde gif he wiste þone timan hwænne se ðeof come his hus to brecenne . and he nolde gefafian þam þeofe nateshwon þæt he underdulfe digellice his hus ; beoð forði gearwe forðanðe ge nyton on hwylcere tide mannes sunu cume ; hwæt wenst þu la hwa is getreowe ðeow and snotor

³⁷ There is an entry in his hand which refers to the 'ordinatio Wulfstani episcopi' in 1062 at the beginning of MS Hatton 113 (see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 398, and the short but very detailed discussion by H. Bannister on the date of the manuscript in his 'Note on MS Hatton 113', in *Early Worcester Manuscripts*, ed. by C. H. Turner (Oxford, 1916), pp. lx–lxiii).

³⁸ For the details of this lost copy, see Clemoes in his introduction to the 1964 reprint of *Angelsächsische Homilien*, ed. by Assmann, p. xxiii.

þone ðe se hlaforð sette ofer his hirede þe him do heora mete on rihtne timan ? eadig bið se ðeowa gif he swa deð geornlice þonne se hlaforð on gean cymð . ic cweþe to soðan þæt he hine gesett ofer ealle his god ; ðis godspell is nu gesæd sceortlice on englisc on anfealdum gereorde . and we eac willað þæt andgyt eow secgan on urum gereorde mid sceortum andgyte be ure mæpe . forþanðe we rædaþ ðas rædinge foroft æt þæra halgena mæssan þe we hataþ confessores . swa swa wæs ðas halga wer ille þe we wurðiað todæg mid halgum lofsangum to lofe þam hælende þe hine gewurðode mid heofenlicum wurðmynte ;

CCCC 178, p. 126: Matheus se godspellere us sæde on þysum godspelle . þæt ure hælend crist ða ða he her on life wæs on soðre menniscnyse . betwux mannum . wunigende . þæt he gewarnode hys apostolas þysum wordum and cwæð ; Uigilate ergo quia nescitis qua hora dominus uester uenturus sit ; waciað eornostlice : forþamþe ge nyton on hwylcere tide eower drihten cume ; wite ge þæt to soðan . þæt se hires ealdor wacian wolde . gif he wiste þone timan hwænne se þeof come hy hus to brecene : and he nolde gefafian þam þeofe nateshwon . þæt he underdulse digollice hys hus ; beoð forði gearwe forþamþe ge nytan on hwylcere tide mannes sunu cume ; hwæt wenst ðu la . hwa is getreowe þeow and snotor . þone þe se hlaforð sette ofer hys hirede . þe him do heora mete on rihtne timan ? eadig bið se ðeowa gif he swa deð geornlice : þonne se hlaforð on gean cymð . ic cweðe to soðan þæt he hine gesett ofer ealle hys góð ; ðis godspell is nu gesæd sceortlice on englisc on anfealdum gereorde . and eac we willað þæt andgyt eow secgan on urum gereorde mid sceortum andgyte be ure mæðe . forþamþe we rædað þas rædinge foroft . æt þæra halgena mæssan þe we hataþ confessores . swa swa wæs þes halga wer ille . þe we wurþiað todæg mid halgum lofsangum . to lofe þam hælende þe hyne gewurðode mid heofenlicum wurðmynte ;

MS Hatton 114, p. 126:³⁹ Matheus se godspellere . us sæde on ðysum godspelle . þæt ure hælend crist þa þa he her on life wæs on soðre menniscnyse betwux mannum wunigende : þæt he gewarnode hys apostolas . þysum wordum . and cwæð . Uigilate ergo quia nescitis qua hora dominus uester uenturus sit . waciað eornostlice . forþanðe ge nyton on hwylcere tide eower drihten cume . wite ge þæt to soðan þæt se hires ealdor wacian wolde . gif he wiste þone timan hwonne se ðeof come his hus to brecanne . and he nolde geðafian þam ðeofe nateshwon . þæt he underdulse his hus . beoð forþy gearwe . forþamþe ge nyton on hwylcere tide mannes sunu cume . hwæt wenst þu la hwa is getrywe þeow . and snotor ðone þe se hlaforð sette ofer his hirede þe him do heora mete on rihtne timan ? eadig byð se þeowa gif he swa deð geornlice þonne se hlaforð on gean cymð . ic cweðe to soðan . þæt he hine gesett ofer eale his god . ðis godspell is nu gesæd sceortlice on englisc . on anfealdum gereorde . and eac we willað þæt andgyt eow secgan on urum gereorde mid sceortum

³⁹ Hatton 114 is a manuscript which shows signs of heavy use, both in its own day and later, and it is very fully annotated by a great many hands from the late eleventh century to the thirteenth. It is often very difficult to determine who wrote the punctuation marks in any text, whether the original writer or a later one, and this is particularly so with Assmann IV in this manuscript. I have accepted the high point as original, and also the *punctus elevatus*, even though the inverted comma of this appears in browner ink and is more finely written than the rest of Scribe 2's work. But other marks which are clearly original to his script are also in this finer style, and this leads me to believe that the *elevatus* is his. I discount as later the many heavier points on the writing line.

andgyte . be ure mæðe . forþan þe we rædað þas rædinge foroft æt þæra halgena mæssan þe
 we hateþ confessores . swa swa wæs þes halga wer . ille . þe we wurþiaþ todæg mid halgum
 lofsangum to lofe þam hælende þe hine gewurðode mid heofenlicum wurðmynte .

It may be seen here that the two CCCC manuscripts coincide in their use of the *versus*, although only CCCC 178 has the *elevatus*, which may be linked with its scribe's more frequent use of the point in line with a much heavier degree of punctuation in that manuscript overall. Peter Clemoes, in his supplementary introduction to the reissue of Assmann, notes that textually MSS CCCC 178 and Hatton 114 are so closely related in Assmann IV that they are likely to have been drawn from the same exemplar,⁴⁰ and an example of their closeness here is in the order of *and eac we willað* towards the end of the passage, as against *and we eac willaþ* in CCCC 188. But the punctuation in all three manuscripts is different, the two CCCC manuscripts in fact being closer to each other than either is to MS Hatton 114.

I must digress at this point to consider the relative significance of these three manuscripts in the transmission of Ælfric material. It so happens that CCCC 188 is a very important manuscript in the Ælfric homiletic tradition, ranking with MS Royal 7.C.xii, which is annotated by Ælfric, and CUL, MS Gg.3.28, which is thought to be either a Cerne manuscript or a very close copy of one.⁴¹ CCCC 188 contains a complete copy of Ælfric's First Series homilies, in a form which incorporates all the late changes which Ælfric made to its items (which we know he was constantly adapting throughout his working lifetime). But the significance of the manuscript for Ælfric studies also lies in the fact that immediately following the First Series items, and without any break in the manuscript, the scribe wrote a copy of Assmann IV, preceded by a note which reads:

Hunc sermonem nuper rogatu uenerandi episcopi athelwoldi scilicet iunioris anglie
 transtulimus quem huius libelli calci inscribi fecimus . ne nobis desit . cum ipse habeat ;

[Recently we translated into English at the request of the venerable bishop, namely Æthelwold the Younger, this sermon, which we caused to be copied at the end of this book, lest it be lost to us when he has it.]

The fact that this note and the homily are written continuously by the single scribe of the manuscript in immediate conjunction with the previous item suggests that CCCC 188 is a faithful copy of the scribe's copy-text. The note refers to the Æthelwold who became Bishop of Winchester in 1006, after Ælfric had become Abbot of Eynsham in 1005. In other words, this homily was composed late in

⁴⁰ Clemoes in *Angelsächsische Homilien*, ed. by Assmann, p. xxiv.

⁴¹ On CUL, MS Gg.3.28, see Clemoes, 'Introduction', p. 147.

Ælfric's career at the specific request of the new bishop, and a copy, together with this note of its origin, was kept at Eynsham. The version in CCCC 188 is clearly very close to that copy, even if the surviving manuscript cannot be Ælfric's scriptorium copy itself (as Humfrey Wanley thought) because its scribal hand is now dated to the 1020s.⁴² Although Ælfric did not see this particular manuscript, then, it is (like CUL, MS Gg.3.28) very close to one that he himself supervised, the difference between them being that, while CUL, MS Gg.3.28 represents the First (as well as the Second) Series at an early stage of its development, CCCC 188 shows the First Series as augmented and revised. Whereas Ælfric scholars see CCCC 188 as very significant in showing the development of the First Series during Ælfric's lifetime, from our more limited perspective we might see the punctuation in it as reflecting Ælfric's own, or at least that of his scriptorium.

CCCC 178 is quite different. John Pope, for example, sees it as 'a descendant, substantially unchanged, of a lost volume of some importance, though not of one that was put together under Ælfric's supervision'.⁴³ In other words, more rearrangement of materials intervened between Ælfric's fair copy and CCCC 178 than between Ælfric and CCCC 188. As we have seen, MS Hatton 114 contains a collection put together very much later and at a greater distance still from Ælfric, with the Assmann IV piece being a later addition made after the original set was both written and given a contents list. Both CCCC 178 and MS Hatton 114 are Worcester manuscripts, and there is no doubt that they had a common ancestor in their pedigree of Assmann IV, but in neither case can we expect the punctuation to reflect accurately that of Ælfric's scriptorium. The lines of transmission are too long. Nonetheless what is surprising here is the continuity of use of the *interrogativus*, the one strong mark of punctuation to be found at the same place in all three versions. And surely we might speculate here that the mark goes back to Ælfric in all three, as it surely does in CCCC 188.

The *punctus interrogativus* is not confined to Ælfric texts in the eleventh century, but it is found more frequently in them than it is elsewhere. If we take the simple example of the principal scribe of MS Hatton 114, we find that he uses the *interrogativus* frequently in the Ælfric items which constitute the main body of his work in that manuscript (as against his work in MSS Hatton 113 and Junius 121), but he does not use it in non-Ælfric pieces such as Ker's items 43, 44, 53, 54, 55,

⁴² For further details of the significance of this note, see Sisam, *Studies in the History*, pp. 176–77. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 70, indicates that in his view the manuscript is no earlier than the later 1020s (see the bracketed phase, after his 'xi', which reads 'second quarter?').

⁴³ *Homilies of Ælfric*, ed. by Pope, I, 62.

or 56, even though there are opportunities for him to do so. On the other hand, some scribes do not confine their use of the mark to Ælfric texts. MS Bodley 340/342, which is basically an Ælfrician homiliary in which items from the First and Second Series are reordered into a single chronological sequence, is amplified by a number of anonymous items, and some of these also contain examples of the *punctus interrogativus*, for example in the unpublished Palm Sunday homily (DOE corpus designation 'HomS 18'), item 23 in Ker's list.⁴⁴ To move away from homiletic prose altogether, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 76, which contains the later version of Gregory's *Dialogues* in Old English, has many possibilities for the use of the *interrogativus* since it is a question-and-answer dialogue. And the *interrogativus* is indeed present there, insofar as there are a number of examples of it in the first seven folios, although oddly they then disappear. The use of the *interrogativus* during the eleventh century is, then, erratic, and the subject deserves a fuller examination than I have room for here.

The scribe of MS Hatton 114 is an unusual one. He is one of two scribes concerned to make the compendium of MSS Hatton 113/114 more user-friendly, as can be seen in his addition of the list of contents. (The other scribe is the otherwise unknown person who added the running titles to every page of the two volumes.) His beautiful handwriting and his use of the **ra** ligature, together with his reproduction of the *punctus interrogativus* and his correction of one of the original items of the collection with a marginal note, mark him out as distinctive amongst the very large numbers of scribes writing Old English whose work survives to us from the eleventh century. His interest in the MSS Hatton 113/114 homiliary suggests someone who either himself preached from it or used it for refectory reading, or someone who was responsible to the person who did. In either case, he was an important man in the hierarchy of his monastery. All of this we may deduce from careful sifting of evidence freely available, but only brought to light by browsing through Old English manuscripts.

Well over a thousand scribes wrote English in the period from the earliest remains (copies of 'Cædmon's Hymn' in the margins of manuscripts of Bede's Latin *Historia* dating from the early eighth century) to the conventional end of the Old English period in 1100.⁴⁵ There are some whose names we know, for example

⁴⁴ The text is included in Kenneth Gordon Schaefer, 'An Edition of Five Old English Homilies for Palm Sunday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1972).

⁴⁵ See, for instance, my *A Conspectus of Scribal Writing English, 960-1100*, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies, 11 (Cambridge, forthcoming).

from their colophons, such as Ælfric of Bath in CCCC, MS 140, or from their handwriting, like Hemming.⁴⁶ Some, like Hemming or like the principal scribes of MSS Hatton 113/114 and Bodley 340/342, wrote a great deal that survives. Others, like those who wrote a single word, as either an annotation or an inter-linear alteration, or like one of the dozens who wrote simply a name (their own or someone else's), such as Æthelric in CCCC, MS 198, Eadgith in the Vercelli Book, and Siferth and Tate in CCCC, MS 286, may never be identified. But there may be many more anonymous scribes, like Ker's Scribe 2 of MS Hatton 114, whose work can throw light on the life and letters of late Anglo-Saxon England and who deserve to be highlighted. I end by quoting a paragraph written by Kenneth Sisam nearly a century ago, but still, I think, pertinent today:

When a new subject [...] becomes established academically, teaching tends to follow the lines that have been worked successfully; they become implicit in systematic training, and are fortified by a professional technique. But with limited materials, the law of diminishing returns presses inexorably. The advances which are the real life of a study become smaller, fewer, and more hardly won. Some will then say that the subject is worked out. It is more cheerful to believe that certain veins, once rich, are no longer yielding enough, and to look for others to supplement them. The manuscripts, at least, have still plenty to offer.⁴⁷

Without wasting ink castigating those veins which are too often today the subject of graduate dissertations, it is certainly worth stressing that palaeographic and codicological studies are too infrequently adopted as PhD subjects. But I have also attempted to demonstrate in this essay that there are other areas still worthy of study. Editing is one of them. A new edition of Assmann IV, which has figured so large in this essay, is greatly to be desired, while a number of items in MS Bodley 340 have still to be published. All such projects are not only possible but have now been greatly facilitated by the ASMMF facsimiles, inspired by the honoree of this volume.

⁴⁶ For a survey of Hemming's work, see N. R. Ker, 'Hemming's Cartulary: A Description of the Two Worcester Cartularies in Cotton Tiberius A. xiii', in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, ed. by R. W. Hunt (Oxford, 1949), pp. 49–75.

⁴⁷ Sisam, *Studies in the History*, pp. 197–98.

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY: OLD ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS AND THEIR PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Elaine M. Treharne

This essay is a reflection on the current state of early medieval manuscript studies, and particularly on contemporary scholarly responses to the early medieval books that contain Old English. It is a pleasure and privilege to contribute to a volume honouring Nick Doane's work as a manuscript scholar, as the general editor of the invaluable Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile series, and as a textual critic. Nick is a frank, innovative, and always challenging scholar, and, inspired by his refusal to toe anyone else's scholarly line, what follows seeks to ask those of us who work on manuscripts to consider the ways in which we describe the materials with which we work, and particularly the hands that write our early English texts. The essay builds on research in which I have been engaged since realizing there are few established and accepted criteria for describing scribal hands, few objective and consistent classification systems available to palaeographers today beyond the labelling of types of script. This is despite the great progress made in the fields of palaeography and codicology during the last century and the opening decade of the new millennium.

The history of palaeography is a long one, effectively beginning with the study of diplomatic as early as the thirteenth century, when documents were tested for their authenticity according to the precise form in which they were written.¹ During the early modern period as well, handwriting per se continued to engage the interest of scholars like the great antiquarians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

¹ My thanks to Professor Andrew Prescott for many fruitful discussions about the emergence of palaeography as a discipline, and thanks also to Drs Anne Marie D'Arcy and Orietta Da Rold for hours of conversation about palaeography and aesthetics.

men such as Matthew Parker, John Joscelyn, and Robert Cotton. Authors such as John Donne, too, concerned themselves with the issues of writing and the dissemination of best practice. This occasionally summed itself up as a reaction to the machinery of the printing press, as in a Latin verse epistle composed by Donne and addressed to 'my very learned and dearest friend, Mr Andrews D.D.':

What printing presses yield we think good store
 But what is writ by hand we reverence more [...]:
 A book that with this printing-blood is dyed
 On shelves for dust and moth is set aside,
 But if't be penned it wins a sacred grace
 And with the ancient fathers takes its place.²

This veneration of the handwritten book highlighted by Donne in this extract is explicitly laid out in the epigraph to this letter, which tells us all we need to know about the circumstances of the poem's composition: 'About a book which, when he borrowed it, was a printed book, but which was torn in pieces at home by his children, and was later returned written out by hand.'³ The irony of the poem's lauding of the manuscript book over the printed book — since a manuscript is all he has now of his original, loaned volume — is not lost, but neither is the idea that manuscript books, chirographic artefacts, are often held in greater reverence than the printed work (with the obvious exception of iconic works like the Gutenberg Bible or Shakespeare's First Folio). This reverence, though, is not ubiquitous, and it is a challenge to try to account for the way in which palaeography has emerged not as the scientific discipline it has often been claimed to be,⁴ but rather as an

² Translation by Edmund Blunden, 'Some Seventeenth-Century Latin Poems by English Writers', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 25 (1955–56), 10–22 (p. 11). For the Latin text of the poem with its heading, see John Donne, *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, ed. by W. Milgate (Oxford, 1967), p. 112:

Parturiunt madido quae nixu praela, recepta,
 Sed quae scripta manu, sunt veneranda magis [...].
 Qui liber in pluteos, blattis cinerique relictos,
 Si modo sit praeli sanguine tinctus, abit.

This same verse epistle is briefly discussed by Graham Caie, 'The Manuscript Experience: What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us about Authors and Texts', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. by Denis Renevey and Graham D. Caie (New York, 2008), pp. 10–27 (p. 10).

³ 'De Libro cum Mutuaretur Impresso; / Domi a pueris frustratim lacerato; et post reddito / Manuscripto.'

⁴ Such claims can be traced as early as Thomas Astle's *The Origin and Progress of Writing* (London, 1784) in which, he tells us, he intends to illustrate 'the Diplomatic Science; the knowledge of

objective, aesthetically driven art. This paper thus seeks to determine the evolution of the aesthetic impulse in palaeography and to draw attention to the need, perhaps, for a re-evaluation of the way scribal hands are described and categorized.

Palaeography did not emerge as a subject of study in its own right until the late seventeenth century. Then its origins are seen in the work of two persons who are widely credited with initiating the description and analysis of Greek and Latin manuscripts: Jean Mabillon, who published *De re diplomatica libri sex* in 1681, and Bernard de Montfauçon, known especially for his *Palaeographia graeca*, published in 1708.⁵ The seminal works by these men on the early manuscripts of the Christian tradition, which they examined all across Europe, are still considered to be the foundational volumes of palaeographical study in the modern era. Indeed, Montfauçon's use of the word 'Palaeographia' is believed to be the first use of that term, which is not attested in English until 1806 (in the French-derived spelling 'paleography', though the Latinate spelling 'palaeography' soon came to be generally preferred).⁶ At the same time as the great Continental Benedictine scholars were active, equally significant work on English manuscripts was published by three founders of modern Anglo-Saxon studies, George Hickes, Thomas Smith, and Humfrey Wanley. The palaeographical work of Wanley was exemplary in its systematic nature; as Peter Heyworth points out, it was around the year 1698 that Wanley requested that he be permitted to lift all of the manuscript leaves used as pastedowns in printed books in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in order to produce a catalogue of handwriting from these examples.⁷ And as Wanley explained to Thomas Smith when requesting the loan of some charters in 1697,

My intent is, to trace the Greek and Latine letters from the oldest Monuments of antiquity now extant, as the Marbles and Medals to the MSS. and so down to the present age. [...] But the Saxon I would especially bring down from the oldest Charters to the present

which will enable us to form a proper judgement of the age and authenticity of manuscripts, charters, records, and other monuments of antiquity' (p. ii).

⁵ On this, and for a brief overview of the history of palaeography, see *A Palaeographer's View: Selected Writings of Julian Brown*, ed. by Janet Batley, Michelle Brown, and Jane Roberts (London, 1993), pp. 47–86, esp. pp. 57–59.

⁶ See the *OED*, s.v. 'palaeography', with its 1806 citation: A. Clarke, *Bibliographical Misc.* ii. 202 (table) 'Literary, ancient, modern, Bibliography, Paleography'.

⁷ Peter Heyworth, 'Wanley, Humfrey (1672–1726)', in *DNB* [accessed 8 October 2009]. On Wanley's life, see also Milton McC. Gatch, 'Humfrey Wanley (1672–1726)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, vol. II: *Literature and Philosophy*, ed. by Helen Damico (New York, 1998), pp. 45–57.

English hands. The Charters I believe may be older than the [manuscript] books and may determine the age of all the Saxon MSS, with the assistance of some other remarks.⁸

Even in these early days of palaeography, then, the need for a methodical descriptive approach was evident to its keenest exponents, and Wanley, explicitly building on the work of Mabillon, set in motion elements of palaeographical analysis that remain in place to this day.⁹

It is to the nineteenth century, however, that we may turn for the emergence of scholarship that persistently labelled palaeography as a 'science'. In repeatedly describing palaeography in this way during the later decades of the nineteenth century, scholars sought to illustrate the benefits of a systematic analysis of script and illustration, as evinced in Wanley's work and, to a lesser extent, that of Thomas Astle (the eighteenth-century English antiquary). They did this the better to describe and date manuscripts whose importance only became apparent as the keepers of the great libraries of the nation began to analyse these collections thoroughly, regulating their cataloguing and display methods while making the collections accessible to a wider readership. It should be no surprise that it is the astonishingly talented librarians and curators of the British Museum — latterly the British Library — and the Bodleian Library who not only professionalized curatorial management, but also found the time to write books on manuscripts and palaeography, setting important standards for other scholars to emulate.

Of these men, the most notable are Sir Edward Augustus Bond (1815–98), Sir Frederic Madden (1801–73), and Sir Edward Maunde Thompson (1840–1929).¹⁰

⁸ *The Letters of Humfrey Wanley: Palaeographer, Anglo-Saxonist, Librarian, 1672–1726*, ed. by Peter Heyworth (Oxford, 1989), p. 62, with two sets of square brackets omitted.

⁹ So, for example, the labelling of scripts (though some labels, such as 'Langobardic' have failed to survive); the individual descriptions of letter-forms with illustration; and the understanding of the significance of charter materials for dating other extant writings. See Wanley's letters to George Hickes and others in *The Letters of Humfrey Wanley*, ed. by Heyworth. It is interesting to see how the labelling of scripts has evolved, too. For example, Astle's suggestions seem not to have gained any currency. In *The Origin and Progress of Writing*, Astle comments: 'The History of Writing in England is very copious, and a great number of authentic documents are engraven for the information of our readers. The writing which prevailed in this island from the time the Romans left it, till the Norman Conquest, I have divided into five kinds, namely Roman Saxon, Set Saxon, Running-Hand Saxon, Mixt Saxon, and Elegant Saxon; from this last descended what hath been called the Monkish English; a species of writing usually termed Modern Gothic, which was peculiar to this kingdom' (p. xxiii).

¹⁰ On some of the complex relationships of employees of the British Museum at this time, see Alan Bell, 'The Journal of Sir Frederic Madden, 1852', *The Library*, 29 (1974), 405–21.

All three were Keepers of Manuscripts at the British Museum, and thus all three are described as 'librarian' in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, but only Madden and Thompson are also described as 'palaeographer'. Each of them managed a full-time curatorial position in addition to producing an impressive number of scholarly publications, including editions of medieval texts and manuscripts. Moreover, in 1873, in the spirit of rejuvenating scientific interest in, and knowledge of, ancient cultures, Bond and Thompson formed the Palaeographical Society, the first publication of which was a complete facsimile of the Utrecht Psalter.¹¹ Its editor, Walter de Gray Birch, provides an excellent, if prolix, introduction to that manuscript and to previous palaeographical scholarship (omitting mention, however, of the great Humfrey Wanley). In relation to the status of palaeography in the 1870s, Birch states:

The formation of the Palaeographical Society dates from November, 1873, and, contemporary with the establishment of this prosperous undertaking, must be taken the foundation of a new and native school of palaeography, which seeks by the extensive employment of permanent photography to extend the study, and by means of perfectly trustworthy facsimiles to collect useful data upon which to build hereafter more correct general rules than have as yet been laid down. Mr Bond, in his address issued at the date mentioned above, says of its scope:— 'This society has been formed for the purpose of collecting materials for the study of a branch of antiquarian science not yet established on a satisfactory basis, though one in which it is possible to attain to a very great exactness.'¹²

In the movement towards the confirmation of palaeography as a 'science', for which 'data' could be accumulated to form 'rules' and to achieve 'exactness', Birch astutely recognizes the role photography played as absolutely fundamental — more critical a century ago than digitization is today. From this invention stemmed the possibility of discovering truths previously hidden by the subjectivity of copyists and inscribers. Birch also comments as follows regarding the crucial value of photographic facsimiles:

Without these, the present state of palaeographic science had been susceptible of but little improvement. For while the teaching of the Benedictines in their colossal work, the *Nouveau Traité*,¹³ the propositions of Bastard, Mabillon, Montfaucon, Wailly, Silvestre, and

¹¹ My thanks to Professor Andrew Prescott for discussions about the British Museum at this time.

¹² Walter de Gray Birch, *The History, Art and Palaeography of the Manuscript Styled the Utrecht Psalter* (London, 1876), pp. 61–62.

¹³ Charles François Toustain, René Prosper Tassin, and Jean Baptiste Baussonnet, *Nouveau Traité de diplomatique: où l'on examine les fondemens de cet art* (Paris, 1762).

others, are for the most part perfectly sound and to be relied upon with that implicit faith that is justly due to those who have bestowed, as these illustrious masters have done, no small portion of their life and labour upon their works, yet these great palaeographers laboured under an unfortunate inability to set before their pupils, in practical illustration and profound theories, faithful representations of materials most indispensable for the right appreciation of the matters under their consideration. They were, in point of fact, under the stern necessity of having to be content with the best productions of the manual skill of artists who, although they for the most part produced excellent facsimiles, yet they not unfrequently failed to catch the spirit of the original, and thus produced not only an unfaithful, but which was worse still, a deceptive picture.¹⁴

Birch's evaluation is fundamentally significant for the development of palaeography. He insists that the verification that photography could give for manuscript analysis supplants the need for 'implicit faith' in the reliability of engravings or pen-drawn imitative script. The role of the Palaeographical Society itself, then, by disseminating plates, was to make accessible the 'spirit of the original', determinable through photographic reproduction providing access to original sources as never before. But 'truth' and 'science' become conflated at this point in the history of palaeography, confounded with 'opinion' and notions of artistic quality more closely allied with the craft of calligraphy and the aesthetic movement of connoisseurship than with any 'science' of palaeography. This point has serious repercussions for the field of medieval manuscript studies.

It is precisely at this time in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries that we see converge some of the most important artistic and intellectual movements in the modern era, movements that have dominated later fields of scholarly enquiry even while not always being noticed or acknowledged. This convergence of artistic and historical areas of investigation, and the influence of this convergence on librarianship and public reading, on textual editing and the recovery of ancient literary and historical works, on the detailed analysis and evaluation of manuscripts, on the craft of book-making, and on the function and practice of handwriting, can be traced in the work of some of the most significant figures in the arts and humanities to this day. These include, of course, William Morris and his Kelmscott Press, with its highly significant set of special editions of classic literary works, and Walter Skeat and Richard Morris (the one a professional academic, the other an independent scholar), with their numerous publications for learned societies. The revival of British humanistic scholarship during this period is evinced in the formation of such societies as the Roxburghe Club (1812), the earliest bibliographic

¹⁴ Birch, *History, Art and Palaeography*, pp. xv–xvi.

society in the world; the Surtees Society (1834), promoting the literary heritage of Northumberland; the Camden Society (1838), which merged with the Royal Historical Society in 1896; the Percy Society (1840–52), devoted to the accurate publication of medieval poetic texts; the Philological Society (1842), based at the University of London; the Early English Text Society (1864); the American Philological Association (1869), concerned to promote classical studies; the Modern Language Association of America (1883); the Bibliographical Society (1892); the British Academy (1902); and the English Association (1906).

Running in parallel with these internationally famed endeavours are the many volumes published during the same period that deal with palaeography and handwriting and that form a class of hybrid books, illustrating the rather ambiguous status and definition of palaeography during this period. For this was also the period when graphology, or the study and analysis of handwriting as a guide to human psychology, began to emerge as a subject of interest, though it had to wait for serious recognition until 1985, when the British Academy of Graphology was founded. In her rather inconsistent book *The Key to the Family Deed Chest: How to Decipher and Study Old Documents*, printed in 1893 and still available,¹⁵ Emma Thoyts Cope (described in that book as a historian, genealogist, and palaeographer) commingles graphological aspects of handwriting with diplomatics and a superficial form of palaeography. This hybridity is confirmed when Cope makes an explicit association of handwriting with personal character or mood:

If the subject of handwriting as a test of character is carefully studied, it will be found that immediate circumstances greatly influence it: anxiety or any great excitement of any kind, illness or any violent emotion, will for the moment greatly affect the writing. From handwriting the doctor can hazard an opinion as to the mental state of his patient. In all cases of paralysis the writing is temporarily affected, and the patient is usually at first deprived of the power of writing [...]. It is not strange, then, that with so many causes upon which it depends, writing should be an excellent test of temperament and bodily health [...] [so that from it we can contract] a habit of forming conclusions as to the mental and moral caliber of the writers.¹⁶

In her discussion of books on palaeography, Cope is scathing about the efforts of her fellow countrymen in the exposition of their subject, directing her attention rather to French publications. But despite her knowledge of palaeography, her work illustrates, I think, the fluidity of the discipline's boundary during this period

¹⁵ Emma Thoyts Cope, *The Key to the Family Deed Chest: How to Decipher and Study Old Documents* (London, 1893; repr. Detroit, 1974).

¹⁶ Cope, *Key to the Family Deed Chest*, pp. 15–16.

in a way that reflects social and intellectual *mores* rather than any definable scholarly field. In this latter regard, the likes of Walter de Gray Birch, Sir Augustus Bond, and Sir Frederic Madden, as well as all the editors and scholars involved in the learned societies, are critically important for setting disciplinary standards.

Of great significance was Edward Maunde Thompson's still invaluable *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palaeography*, issued in 1893 as volume 70 of The International Scientific Series (following volume 68 on *Socialism* and volume 69 on *Man and the Glacial Period*) and then reprinted by Clarendon with many more illustrative plates in 1912.¹⁷ This expansive and influential book arguably set the scene for the tripartite manner in which all British books on palaeography and manuscript studies have presented their subject to this day, offering first a photographic plate, then a transcription of the text on that page, and a description of the style of script, with the examples usually arranged in chronological sequence. Since the use of a copious number of plates in the 1912 edition (mostly derived from the New Palaeographical Society's stock of images) allows for extensive accompanying description, Thompson's method established a model for others to follow. Underlying that model, as we have seen above while taking into account Birch's comments on the use of photography, is an apparent faith that 'truth' can be ascertained through the combination of a physical image and a scholarly apparatus. These early plates, however, unlike current colour plates and digitized images, render invisible virtually all the physical elements of the manuscript page, in very many cases, including the outline of the page itself and the depth of ink on the page.¹⁸ In all cases, the focus is entirely upon script.

There is no doubt that Thompson's work is exceptionally erudite and that his breadth of learning would rarely be matched today. He was, however, a man of his time, heavily influenced by an unstated visual aesthetic that colours his observations and analyses. Not all the descriptions accompanying his plates are judgemental in nature, but very many are impressionistic and articulate an opinion rather than a more unbiased view. For example, Thompson writes as follows about early uncial script and its development:

From the fifth to the eighth century uncial was the ordinary book-hand of the first rank. In MSS. of the fifth and sixth centuries, and particularly in those of the earlier century,

¹⁷ Edward Maunde Thompson, *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palaeography*, International Scientific Series, 70 (London, 1893), repr. as *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography* (Oxford, 1912).

¹⁸ Thompson, *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography*, facsimiles 103 and 132–33, for example; subsequent quotations are drawn from this edition.

uncial writing is exact, and is generally formed with much beauty and precision of stroke; in the seventh century it becomes more artificial; in the course of the eighth century it rapidly degenerates and breaks down into a rough, badly-formed hand, or when written with care, is forced and imitative [...]. In fact, as is the case with the handwriting of all periods and countries, the first examples of an established hand are the purest and best: the letters are formed naturally, and therefore consistently. (p. 285)

Such conclusions are built not just on years of direct experience with manuscripts, but also on unstated preferences. For, as scholars and philosophers have asked for centuries, what constitutes ‘beauty’, or the ‘purest’, or the ‘best’? Thompson’s undeclared criteria for the aesthetically pleasing seem here to involve exactness, precision, ‘real-ness’ as opposed to the ‘artificial’, something not ‘rough’ (a term of uncertain meaning) and not ‘badly-formed’, and natural in its formation, as opposed to what is ‘forced’ and ‘imitative’. As a set of general statements, these criteria would not strike any manuscript scholar as unusual or lacking in substance, but such terms as these cannot be thought of as scientific.

Thompson’s personal desiderata for chirographic excellence are evinced throughout his work. At facsimile 86, for example (a late fifth-century copy of Virgil’s *Georgics*, Book I, written in rustic capitals), Thompson declares this book-hand to be ‘a handsome but inconvenient style of literary writing’, one that ‘could not be expected to last’ (p. 283). Here I am not at all sure what ‘inconvenient’ means: is there inconvenience for the reader because of a lack of legibility (a matter that might have more to do with the lack of spacing between words than the script itself), or is there inconvenience for the scribe, for whom this might be a difficult script to write? To cite another example, in relation to his plate 92 (a later seventh-century uncial copy of St Augustine’s homilies from Luxeuil), Thompson describes the scribe’s hand as follows:

A rough hand of the Merovingian period; the letters hasty, uneven, and careless in regard to uniformity. These shortcomings indicate surely the failing power of the uncial as a model literary hand. (p. 289)¹⁹

Similarly, when describing his plate 93 (the Codex Amiatinus, dated here to c. 700), Thompson’s evolutionary premise regarding the historical development of uncial script colours his description of the scribe’s hand:

The text is arranged stichometrically, and the characters are rather ornamental but are bold and in harmony with the large scale of the volume, which measures nearly 20 inches in

¹⁹ Here and elsewhere, the plates provided by Thompson are published such that only the writing from the folio, blended into the white page of the printed book, is visible. The physical context for this writing is absent: not even an outline of the folio is shown.

height and contains more than a thousand leaves. But, if the letters are individually examined, their imitative structure is soon detected; and their lack of uniformity and general unsteadiness indicate that the uncial hand is here passing into the period of decadence, although the handsome scale of the writing rather screens its defects. (p. 297)

In these two passages just quoted, the criteria for excellence are the opposite of 'rough' (evenly formed?); the opposite of 'hasty' (produced slowly?); the opposite of 'careless' (careful); not imitative, not uniform, not unsteady, and so forth. While the facsimile of the Augustine text that constitutes plate 92 does appear to show writing that is a little irregular and even shaky, the Codex Amiatinus looks rather professional and well executed to me. It must be said that such descriptions are not ubiquitous in Thompson's magisterial volume, but they occur often enough to be taken as a reflection of his overall methodology. What he is at pains to show is the gradual degradation of a script from its most perfect formation (its calligraphic zenith) to its period of decline — a paradigm of palaeographical history that appears to be entirely reasonable. In relation to the twelfth century, for example, he writes of the displacement of insular minuscule script by Continental minuscule in the following terms:

With the Norman Conquest the native English form of writing was doomed. From the tenth century [...] the continental minuscule had been displacing it as the handwriting for Latin MSS. There remained for it only books composed in the native tongue; and there it continued, for a certain time, to survive, but gradually losing its independent character, and being evermore overshadowed and superseded by the new writing of the continental school, until at length the memory of the old hand survives in our modern writing only in the paradoxical employment of the letter *y* to represent the old Saxon long thorn. (p. 402)

The language employed here — of the 'native' form being 'doomed', of the loss of independence in its character, of the 'memory of the old hand' — strikes an antiquarian and nostalgic turn of phrase, one that is better suited to high Victorian melodrama than to the 'science of palaeography'. This kind of emotive diction is so frequently encountered in the language of palaeographical description during the late nineteenth century as to raise questions about the nature and purpose of the discipline itself. For all the claims of objectivity that might be put forth, palaeography — while becoming a relatively distinct, but unfixed, area of expertise — inherits and propagates non-scientific traits of connoisseurship and aesthetic preference.

Worth remembering in this connection is that the key British practitioners of palaeography during this period pursued their work in addition to another, usually related, career: Madden, Bond, and Thompson were all librarians, while Montague Rhodes James, the manuscript scholar *par excellence*, was also, successively, director

of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, provost of King's College, Cambridge, and provost of Eton College, as well as being a distinguished ghost-story writer. In fact, in the *DNB*, from more than fifty thousand biographies, only thirty-four entries allude to the profession of the person as a palaeographer, a statistic confirming that this is barely considered to be a field in its own right.²⁰ By way of contrast, over three thousand persons are identified as historians, over seven thousand as writers, almost two thousand as journalists, and over three thousand as clergymen. Most of the biographies in the *DNB* provide for each subject entry one or two major professional descriptors. Thus, Wanley is an 'Old English scholar and librarian'; Madden is a 'palaeographer and librarian'; Thompson, too, is a 'palaeographer and librarian'; Hilary Jenkinson is an 'archivist'; Sir John Rhys, a 'Celtic scholar'. Only four scholars are labelled solely as 'palaeographer': these are the Welsh scholar John Gwenogvryn Evans (also a publisher); Richard Hunt, Keeper of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, 1945–75; the great scholar Elias Lowe, author of the fundamentally important guide *Codices Latini antiquiores*;²¹ and one of the greatest palaeographers in the last century, Neil Ripley Ker.²²

Thus, rather like any field or sub-field that is intrinsically interdisciplinary, palaeography relies on a methodology of enquiry that is not easy to define, while its impact is difficult to quantify. Its methodology and terminology are, however, becoming increasingly important since current scholarship stands at a crossroads comparable to that elucidated by Birch in the 1876 introduction to his *Utrecht Psalter*. At that time, photographic reproduction promised to provide objective truths about ancient writing and its description; now we have digitization and all that this wonder can achieve. Formerly, access to the primary resource was expensive and specialized; now, it is often free and widely accessible.²³ If we are to capitalize

²⁰ *DNB* [accessed 11 December 2007].

²¹ Elias Lowe, *Codices Latini antiquiores*, 11 vols plus supplement (Oxford, 1971–72); 2nd edn of vol. II (1972).

²² The rarity of the palaeographer is perhaps compounded by the lack of recognition of palaeography as a field in its own right; there is currently no Department of Palaeography at any British or North American institution, though various centres or institutes offer instruction in script and epigraphy. On palaeography and its status, see David Ganz, 'Palaeography since Bischoff', in *Omnia Disce: Medieval Studies in Memory of Leonard Boyle, O.P.*, ed. by Anne Duggan, Joan Greatrex, and Brenda Bolton (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 91–107, for a full and thoughtful discussion of the state of the field in 1997.

²³ And one could argue it should be free and accessible, since manuscripts properly belong to the nations at large. Given, however, that digitization and the hosting of images on well-maintained

fully on the potential that the digital scriptorium offers, however, then the blurriness of palaeography and its organizing principles might usefully be appraised with a view to eliminating the widespread variability of descriptive terms and the arbitrariness of evaluative analysis. It is surely desirable to eliminate reliance on an unstated, subjective, visual aesthetic that covertly either privileges or devalues certain scribes, their hands, and the manuscripts in which their work appears.

If the aims of palaeography are 'first, to read ancient texts with accuracy; secondly, to date and localize their handwriting', to quote the great scholar Julian Brown,²⁴ then it is worth paying particular attention to the achievement of Neil Ripley Ker, Reader in Palaeography at the University of Oxford from 1946 until his death in 1982, for in terms of vernacular palaeography and the study of early medieval manuscripts in Britain more generally, there can hardly be anyone more significant than he. Building on the tradition of palaeography that he learned from the masterly writings of Humfrey Wanley, Edward Maunde Thompson, and Montague Rhodes James, Ker published a series of books and articles that are foundational reading for any medievalist. These range from analyses of individual scribal writings to the monumental *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* and *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* — scholarship that one cannot imagine will ever lose its relevance.²⁵

More than fifty years ago, in 1957, that foundational book, Ker's *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, was published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford.²⁶ Supplemented with addenda, it was published in a revised edition by Oxford in 1990 (dramatically underestimated in its print run), and subsequent additions have been published by Mary Blockley.²⁷ For someone entering the field of

websites can be a costly exercise, the result may be high fees for access to full functionality, as is the case currently with Parker on the Web, though select features of that site are available without charge at <<http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/page.do?forward=home>>.

²⁴ Brown, in *A Palaeographer's View*, ed. by Bately, Brown, and Roberts, p. 47.

²⁵ N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain* (London, 1964); Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1969–83; vol. IV by Ker and Alan Piper, Oxford, 1992). For a brief account of Ker's life and work, see Teresa Webber, 'Ker, Neil Ripley (1908–1982)', *DNB* [accessed 11 October 2007]. See also Kevin Kiernan, 'N.R. Ker (1908–1982)', in *Medieval Scholarship*, vol. II, ed. by Damico, pp. 425–37.

²⁶ N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957; repr. with a suppl., 1990).

²⁷ Mary Blockley, 'Addenda and Corrigenda to N.R. Ker's "A Supplement to 'Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon'"', *Notes and Queries*, 29 (1982), 1–3.

Anglo-Saxon studies during the last fifty years, life without Ker would have seemed unimaginable. The volume — the culmination of many decades of work by Ker — was instantly recognized in reviews as indispensable, a magisterial achievement, ‘essential to the serious student of any aspect of Anglo-Saxon England’, as D. J. V. Fisher put it in his *English Historical Review* article of 1959.²⁸ The *Catalogue* thus became the starting point for research on the c. 415 manuscripts containing English from the period c. 735–1220. It has become, in effect, the scholarly bible, for the modern age, of early medieval textual production in the vernacular in England.

The pre-eminent position now occupied by Ker’s *Catalogue* was forecast by the equally eminent Kenneth Sisam in his review of that book in *Review of English Studies* in 1959. Sisam prophetically observed that ‘an editor will not be shirking his duty if, instead of trying himself to provide a palaeographical description of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts he is working on, he refers to this *Catalogue* and checks the matters of fact he intends to use’. Later in his review Sisam adds: ‘Wanley’s *Catalogue* has held the field for two centuries and a half, and it may be as long before Mr. Ker’s *Catalogue* is replaced by another complete resurvey of the manuscripts that contain Anglo-Saxon.’²⁹ Sisam thus readily recognized, and indeed recommended, how extraordinarily dominant Ker would become in the field of manuscript studies, and he predicted that this dominance would be long-lived.

Sisam’s prophecies seem well on their way towards being fulfilled. I wonder at what cost this dominance has been achieved, however, and with what effect? Fifty-four years on, it seems worthwhile to pause and examine Ker’s immense achievement and its impact on Anglo-Saxon studies. One might say, I think without prejudice, that Ker’s opinions are generally regarded as nearly unimpeachable. He is cited by scholars with a reverence seldom seen anywhere else, and new work on manuscripts — their date, or their scribes, or their localization — is usually either explicitly dependent on Ker or is ignored if it offers a challenge to Ker. It is almost as if little progress has been made on our understanding of the fundamental questions surrounding vernacular manuscript production during the early medieval period — as if what Ker said was the last word on the subject.

One unfortunate effect of the dominant influence of Ker’s *Catalogue* is that to some extent, reliance on this volume tends to separate the extant codices containing Old English, and the texts written in Old English that are contained within

²⁸ D. J. V. Fisher, review of *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* by N. R. Ker, *English Historical Review*, 74 (1959), 480–82.

²⁹ Kenneth Sisam, review of *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, by N.R. Ker, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 10 (1959), 68–71 (at pp. 69 and 71 respectively).

those manuscripts, from the broader historical contexts in which these manuscripts and texts were produced.³⁰ This separation is being reinforced to some extent by the Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile project, which likewise deals only with manuscripts containing texts written in the vernacular (though the contributors to that series have been encouraged to provide full descriptions of Latin contexts and hands as well as of vernacular writings). When referring to English manuscript materials, scholars concentrating on Latin texts often simply reference Ker at key moments, particularly when discussing the dating or localization of sources, neither of which crucial areas of manuscript investigation has made any great strides since the publication of the *Catalogue*.

It is time to move on. Fifty years is a long time for any book — especially a ‘technical reference book, not one that many will read through’, as Sisam put it³¹ — to survive essentially unchallenged. This is not to say that Ker’s extraordinary scholarship can or should be ignored or set aside. His datings, for example, are very rarely disputed, and with good reason; his identification of scribal stints are almost always correct; and his codicological collation is usually precise. But Ker himself knew that it was the responsibility of successive generations of scholars to build on the work of those who precede them.³² It is not enough, and it does Ker no good service, to unquestioningly accept each and every word of his as if it were gospel.

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that some of Ker’s judgements on the manuscripts he viewed and described may be in need of reconsideration, particularly regarding the criteria by which he labelled different scribal hands. The rather curious judgements that Ker sometimes voices first struck me in the 1990s, when I was working on the third scribe copying CCCC, MS 303 (Figure 22).³³ This scribe, who wrote only a few pages of this extensive manuscript, has a hand that differs significantly from the other two hands represented in the codex. The differences extend to a rather irregular aspect, a long-tailed *r*, and a greater currency than is apparent in the hands of Scribes A and B, who write a hybrid minuscule,

³⁰ Of course, this is not what Ker intended. Indeed, he provided information opening up this full context for inspection in his extensive series *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*.

³¹ Sisam, review of *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, p. 69.

³² See Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, discussing his own work: ‘A cataloguer of manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon has the privilege and the *responsibility* of following a great palaeographer [Humphrey Wanley]’ (p. xiii, emphasis mine).

³³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 57, pp. 99–105. Subsequently described in Timothy Graham and others, *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge 1: MSS 41, 57, 191, 302, 303, 367, 383, 422*, ASMMF, 11 (Tempe, 2003).

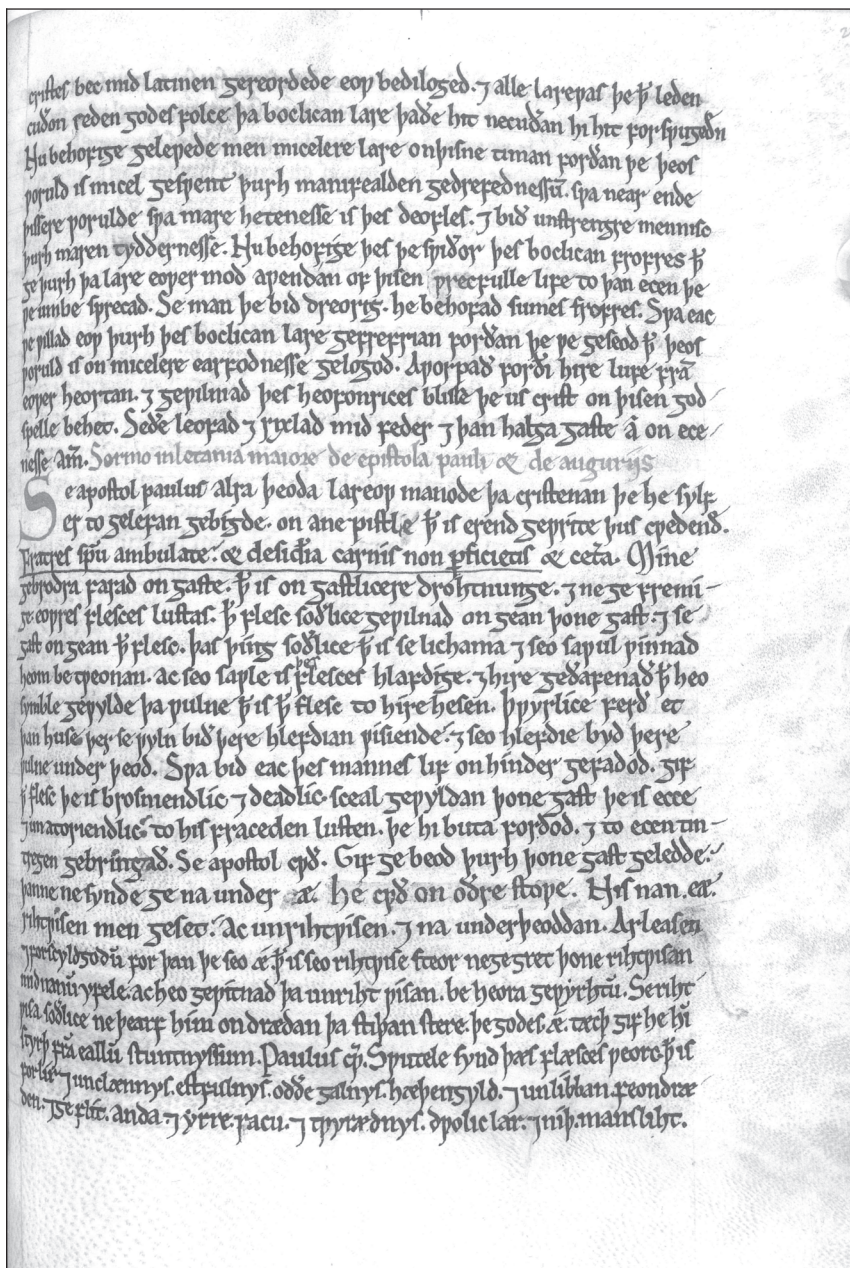


Figure 22. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 303, p. 231. First half of the twelfth century. Reproduced by permission of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Caroline in model, but with Anglo-Saxon letter-forms. Ker calls Scribe C, he of the few pages, 'the less good hand',³⁴ a description that has always struck me as unhelpfully vague and dismissive, particularly since Ker does not specify what he means by the word 'good' here. Does he mean 'less calligraphically accomplished'? 'Less careful'? 'Less professional'? 'More incompetent'? Whatever the answer may be, this scribe's work seems diminished by Ker's assessment. And yet, this 'less good hand', I went on to suggest, was, in fact, the director of the manuscript's compilation; he certainly provided the rubrics, some of the miniated initials, and many corrections within the manuscript, coming along after the codex was completed to undertake these rather senior tasks. Scribe C's writing might have been less aesthetically pleasing or less calligraphically regular than his colleagues', but his role in the manuscript's production was of great import.³⁵ Such, too, was the work of scribes identified by Rodney Thomson as working in the scriptorium at St Albans during the first half of the twelfth century. Indeed, those persons who provided the rubrics and running titles seemed to be directors of the scriptorium, senior in status at least as regards manuscript production.³⁶ If this is the case, then describing Scribe C as 'less good' is not helpful.

In the larger context of Ker's *Catalogue*, rather than just in the description of CCCC 303, what makes Scribe C 'less good' is difficult to ascertain. Nowhere does Ker offer a statement of his descriptive methodology; there are no declared standards, no explicit criteria, according to which he renders his judgements. We are left with the subjective, the aesthetic, the personal; at least, this is how it seems *prima facie*.³⁷ This, I believe, leaves us in rather a quandary, since it seems that all of the writings upon which Ker offers a value judgement might fruitfully be re-examined in the light of more explicit and objective systems of description.

Among many examples that might illustrate this point is Ker's item 64 — CCCC, MS 367 — a composite manuscript, part II of which contains at fols

³⁴ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 105.

³⁵ E. M. Treharne, 'The Production and Script of Manuscripts Containing English Religious Texts in the First-Half of the Twelfth Century', in *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 30 (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1–40.

³⁶ Rodney M. Thomson, *Books and Learning in Twelfth-Century England: The Ending of 'Alter Orbis'* (Walkern, 2006), p. 29.

³⁷ Not all scribal stints are subject to value judgements in the way just described; many are described by specifying their most distinctive letter-forms. In a sense, this reconfirms the impression of an implicit subjectivity within the process of description.

46–52 the Old English *Vision of Leofric*.³⁸ The *Leofric* performance looks like a competent insular minuscule hand in that the words are well spaced and the writing is relatively regular, with few abbreviations and barely any detectable errors. For Ker, though, this text is written in ‘a rough ugly hand’.³⁹ Such descriptive terms as ‘rough’ and ‘ugly’ are certainly condemnatory, but again, these words are used as descriptors without discernible antonyms; thus within Ker’s *Catalogue*, there is no script that is called ‘smooth’ or, indeed, ‘pretty’, though there are at least eight instances of scripts being called ‘handsome’, one instance of ‘attractive’, three instances of ‘beautiful’, and one instance of ‘graceful’.

Of the 402 main entries in Ker’s *Catalogue*, 29 per cent of the items are adjudged using these types of value-laden adjectives; a substantial number of entries have no comment whatsoever; and the remaining entries comment on one or two of the most characteristic elements of the hand. These labels are employed with idiosyncratic reference to the scribes within the manuscripts, and many of the items, of course, contain the work of more than one scribe. Another instructive example of Ker’s methods is London, British Library, MS Cotton Claudius B IV, the Old English Hexateuch. This well-known manuscript dates from the second quarter of the eleventh century and is probably attributable to St Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury.⁴⁰ This exceptional work of art is written by two scribes and illustrated by a third contributor. In the second half of the twelfth century, the volume was extensively annotated. Ker describes the eleventh-century scribes as producing ‘two heavy, uncalligraphic, round hands’, and he tells us that ‘the annotator of s. xii med [the mid-twelfth century] writes a poor hand: he uses the insular forms of **g** and **r** in an otherwise Caroline alphabet in both Latin and OE’.⁴¹

³⁸ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 64, p. 110. This item has recently been discussed by Peter Stokes, ‘The Vision of Leofric: Manuscript, Text and Content’, *Review of English Studies* (forthcoming). My thanks to Dr Stokes for sending me a copy of this paper in advance of publication.

³⁹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 64, p. 110.

⁴⁰ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 142, pp. 178–79.

⁴¹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 142, p. 179. The most recent commentator on the manuscript notes in a relatively unjudgemental fashion that the second scribe is ‘more angular and cramped’ in his work, and that his writing ‘slants to the left and uses many more abbreviations than does his counterpart’. See Benjamin Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto, 2007), p. 21; this is a fully illustrated publication. See also the three plates in Jane Roberts, *Guide to Scripts used in English Writings up to 1500* (London, 2005), colour plate 2 (between pp. 12 and 13) and pp. 79 and 81.

What Ker seems to be saying here is that the twelfth-century annotator's writing is poor because he produces a hybrid script, when, in fact, such a hybrid script is widely used in post-Conquest manuscripts and is so common as to be regarded as a model script in its own right, as a late English vernacular minuscule. As regards the two eleventh-century scribes, the criteria being employed to describe their hand have to do with aesthetics — in this case, an apparent heaviness and lack of calligraphic expertise. It is not clear, however, what 'heavy' might mean in this instance, though presumably the term refers to duct as well as aspect.

In addition to calligraphic expertise, aspect, duct, and adherence to a model script, Ker sporadically employs other criteria when describing scribal hands. London, British Library, MS Royal 1.A.xiv, a version of the Old English Gospels copied in the second half of the twelfth century, is produced by a scribe who writes, according to Ker, 'a rough, untidy hand'.⁴² Roy Liuzza concurs with this view but uses it as evidence for a more extensive condemnation:

The hand is aptly described by Ker as 'untidy'; by most standards, R is a poorly produced book. The parchment is thick, rough, and full of holes which the scribe has had to write around; erasures and corrections abound — some of these are fairly substantial omissions which have been supplied by adding lines in the bottom margin. The scribe's own hand is often awkward, and appears to be uncertainly modelled after either a rounded or a pointed script. When the poor quality of his materials and the apparent difficulty endured in copying his exemplar are taken into account, however, one can see that the script that the scribe is trying to produce is even and balanced.⁴³

In his lengthy description, Liuzza is careful to justify his statements about the scribe's awkwardness and the poor quality of production of the manuscript, as he sees it. However, many manuscripts in this period were produced with holey membrane, most manuscripts have corrections and erasures, and very many have thick membrane or use substrates of variable quality. None of these features of production need result in the condemnation of the manuscript as poorly produced. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1, for example, known as the Eadwine Psalter or Canterbury Psalter, demonstrates all of these aspects of production and is one of the most *de luxe* codices produced in England.⁴⁴ Moreover, the script of

⁴² Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 245, pp. 315–16. For a plate, see Roberts, *Guide to Scripts*, pl. 28, p. 131.

⁴³ See *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, ed. by R. M. Liuzza, EETS o.s., 304 and 314, 2 vols (Oxford, 1994–2000), I, p. xxxix. The same scribe's work is described at p. xli as being unruly and lacking in formality.

⁴⁴ See *The Eadwine Psalter: Text, Image, and Monastic Culture in Twelfth-Century Canterbury*, ed. by Margaret Gibson, T. A. Heslop, and Richard W. Pfaff (London, 1992).

MS Royal 1.A.xiv, to my eye, is an upright, angular hand that is laterally expansive (that is, broad on the horizontal axis), with a small degree of fracturing in the bows and the bowls in a manner that illustrates a late protogothic tendency. It exhibits relatively consistent clarity of word division, is not very highly abbreviated, and has been carefully corrected, demonstrating the wish for a useable text. Quite why it should be called 'rough' or 'untidy', then, is unclear without some explicit compendium. To extrapolate from this observation that this is a poorly produced manuscript is not helpful, particularly in the context of later twelfth-century vernacular manuscript production, for there is relatively little evidence from this period to serve as the basis of comparisons.⁴⁵

Untidiness is certainly a perceived characteristic that Ker comments upon relatively often. He tells us, for example, that London, British Library, MS Cotton Faustina A IX (shown in Figure 23), containing twelfth-century homilies, exhibits 'an untidy hand, lacking character, probably the same throughout, but it becomes smaller'.⁴⁶ In addition to messiness or irregularity — however we are meant to interpret untidiness here — a new defining trait is introduced: that of 'character'. All scribal hands have character, I believe, since all are created through human agency, with the inconsistencies, idiosyncrasies, and grapholectal features that allow for identification, dating, and localization, or that permit scholars to speculate on whether or not the scribe was trained as part of a group in a major scriptorium, or was a part-time monastic scribe, or had a particular role to play within the manuscript's production.

Another example from Ker's *Catalogue* might support my claim about the ambiguity of 'character'. London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A XV is, as all readers will know, the *Beowulf* manuscript, dateable to the beginning of the eleventh century.⁴⁷ Ker tells us simply that the manuscript is 'in two hands [...] contemporary with one another, but dissimilar in character, (2) being a late type of square A-S minuscule and (1) a smaller, more pointed and delicate script, influenced by Caroline minuscule'.⁴⁸ At this point, Ker seems to be using 'character' to denote script-type, rather than to imply distinctiveness or finesse, which seems to

⁴⁵ Comparison might be made, perhaps, with Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 1 (*The Orrulum*), with its misshapen leaves and compressed writing; or with Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 343, with its tall and angular script; or with CUL, MS li.1.33, with its corrections, marginal emendations, holes, and varied scribal practices, even within the same stint.

⁴⁶ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 153, pp. 190–93.

⁴⁷ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 216, pp. 281–82.

⁴⁸ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, p. 282.

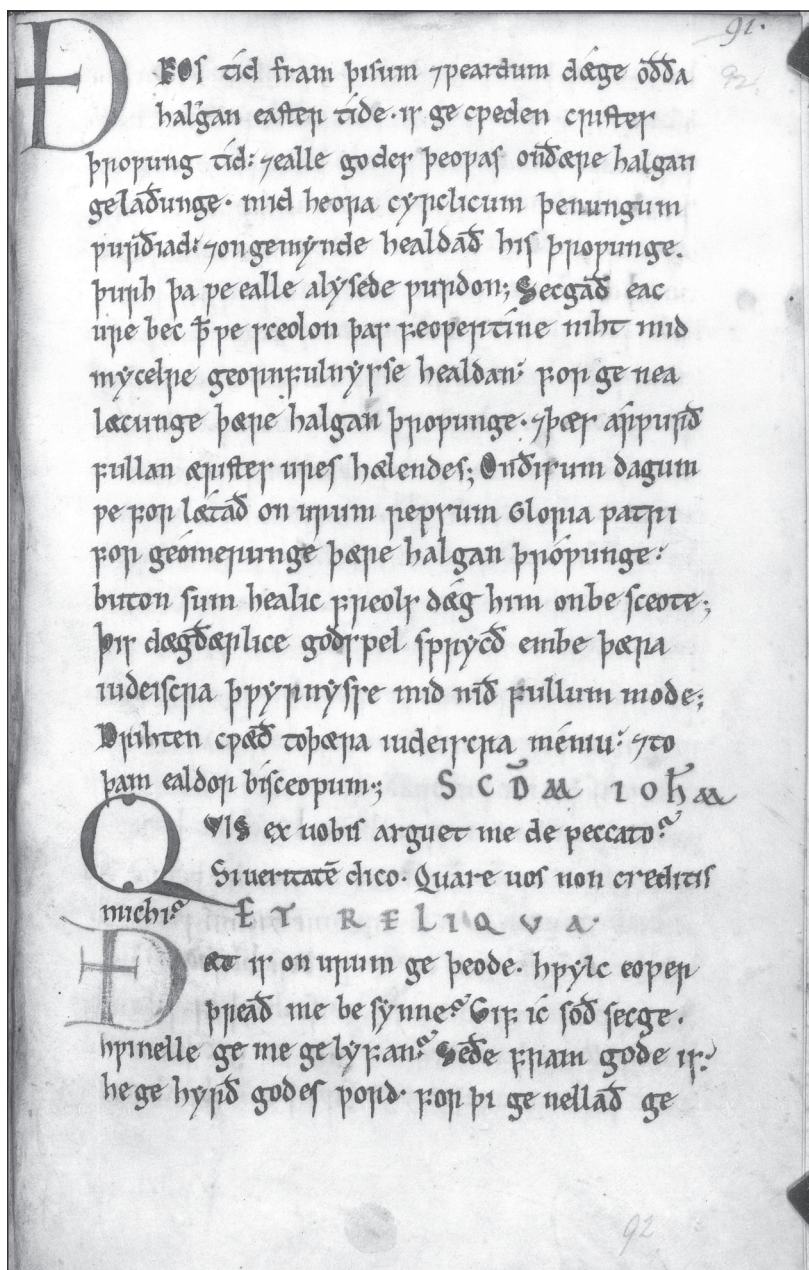


Figure 23. London, British Library, MS Cotton Faustina A IX, fol. 92r. First half of the twelfth century. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

be his meaning in relation to the scribe of MS Cotton Faustina A IX.⁴⁹ In relation to finesse, too, the description of the hand of scribe 2 in MS Cotton Vitellius A XV is hardly — on the face of it — damning, ‘being a late type of square A-S minuscule’. However, it quickly becomes apparent that in relation to scribe 1 of the same manuscript, scribe 2’s writing is ‘bigger, less pointed and less delicate’,⁵⁰ adjectives that imply value judgements. Here, those judgements are based not on character or adherence to a model script, nor on uncalledigraphic tendencies, but rather on the criteria of size, aspect, and weight.

Not all manuscripts are described negatively in Ker’s *Catalogue*, of course, as the evaluation of the hand of the *Beowulf* manuscript’s scribe 1 shows. Many scribes are complimented for their work: thus, the eleventh-century scribe of the earliest part of CCCC, MSS 419 and 421 is described as having ‘a sprawling, but firm hand’.⁵¹ Here it is clear that ‘sprawling’ is not an admirable characteristic, but this negative element is mitigated by ‘firmness’. A similar judgement is made of London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho C I, part I, an eleventh-century copy of the Gospels, whose scribe is described as having ‘a clear and firm but sprawling hand’.⁵² While the antithesis of ‘sprawling’ might be thought to be ‘condensed’ or ‘contained’ — or ‘regular’, perhaps — suggesting proximity of letter forms, Ker states that the second scribe of London, British Library, MSS Cotton Otho B XI and B X writes ‘letters well separated’,⁵³ a description that suggests that separation of letters is to be commended.

None of this brief overview of Ker’s descriptions is intended to detract from the outstanding quality of his scholarship or from the immense task that he undertook and completed with the publication of his *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*. This is a volume by a scholar who is rightly lauded, quoted, admired, and emulated. There is, however, a very obvious need for scholars, and palaeographers in particular, to employ Ker’s *Catalogue* with a keen sense of the man in his time: as a scholar with a highly developed eye for detail, a sure and impressive visual perspective, a connoisseurship and erudition that very few can achieve today, and the

⁴⁹ This is what seems to be intended by Ker’s description of no. 219 — London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C III, a herbal of the first half of the eleventh century — which is described as being written in ‘a round hand, without character’ (p. 285).

⁵⁰ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 216, p. 282.

⁵¹ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 68, pp. 115–18, at p. 117.

⁵² Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 181, pp. 234–35, at p. 235.

⁵³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, no. 180, pp. 230–34, at p. 234.

time to examine manuscripts at first hand in a manner that the strictures of present-day academic life do not permit. Still, along with these traits comes an unwavering aesthetic authority that is subjective and, arguably, inconsistently applied (as is not surprising considering how many manuscripts Ker studied).⁵⁴ If scholars employ Ker's *Catalogue* unquestioningly, then labels that are unclear and that often devalue a manuscript and its scribes will be promulgated. There is then a need, I suggest, for a clear, unambiguous set of definitions describing script, the physical aspects of manuscript production, and the overall effects that are produced. These definitions should be based not on aesthetics nor on Latin manuscript comparanda that remain unstated, but on the evidence laid before us on the manuscript page.

It is of great importance that this issue is transparently and publicly addressed, and sooner, rather than later. For we have reached a time in the history of technology that might be as significant to the subsequent progress of palaeography and codicology as photography was just over a century ago. The emergence of digital technology does not just democratize manuscript studies; it also highlights the need for an intelligible and accessible system of classification and description. In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century world — a place of permeable boundaries between palaeography and other related investigations into handwriting, an era where palaeography was proclaimed as a science, and when culture and learning were permeated by the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement, with its emphasis

⁵⁴ Of the 117 manuscript descriptions that include some form of subjective characterization of the main scribes of the book or fragment, twenty or so in my database have comments by Ker that open with a description of the model of script the scribe had in mind (Anglo-Saxon minuscule or square Anglo-Saxon minuscule; three are described as being 'of Exeter type', using a sub-set of Anglo-Saxon minuscule as a descriptor). Twenty-one are described by size of script, whether 'small' (usually combined with 'neat'), 'large', 'fair-sized', or 'stately'. Thirty-three are defined by their duct or shape, whether 'square', 'round', 'angular', or 'pointed'. Others are defined by their aspect, whether 'upright', 'up and down', 'sloping' (either forward or backward), 'uneven', 'irregular', 'sprawling', 'spreading', 'fluent', 'heavy', 'untidy', or 'scribbled'. Less helpfully, a number are 'unusual'. In terms of the hands' aesthetic appeal, we enter the world of the imagination. On the positive side, we have 'skilled', 'clear', 'neat' (x 9), 'attractive', 'beautiful', 'skilful', 'careful', 'fluent' (a positive feature, apparently), 'well-written', 'decorative', 'fine', 'tidy', 'well-formed', 'handsome', 'firm', 'good', 'delicate', 'graceful', and 'well-spaced'. On the negative side, the adjectives become wonderfully illustrative of one man's viewpoint: 'ragged', 'not well written', 'clumsy' (x 8), 'stiff', 'uncalligraphic' (x 8, as against only one instance of 'calligraphic'), 'poor', 'very poor', 'inferior', 'less good', 'rough' (x 12), 'rougher', 'undistinguished', 'without character', 'ugly' (x 5), 'irregular', and 'ill-formed'. One script has 'rough form', another 'lacks character', and another is 'debased'. Not one of these adjectives is defined, whether in and of itself, or in relation to the other adjectives being employed; only Ker, therefore, knew what he meant by these descriptions.

on fine artistry — the elitism of manuscript scholarship meant there was little need for clear definitions. Connoisseurs knew the intellectual and artistic framework in which they worked and functioned, and wrote their justly influential books.⁵⁵

The implications of my argument are significant, for the unquestioning acceptance of Ker's descriptive labels, where they occur, potentially results in the privileging of the pretty codex and the confusion of untidiness with carelessness (with important repercussions for the way we view the accuracy of the texts copied by these scribes). In future, it will be the responsibility of scholars to build on Ker's work much as he built on Wanley's. Without Ker's foundational work on Old English manuscripts, we could achieve little; but without recognizing that a consistent set of descriptive terms for script is required, we will achieve nothing new. If we cannot now be more systematic and less judgemental in our palaeographic description at a time when we can digitally enlarge and enhance the minutiae of scribal stints to an extraordinary (and quite unreal) level of detail, then we run the risk of never moving beyond the arbitrary and potentially damaging labelling of the 'good' as a notional gold standard; the arguably 'bad' as worthy only of scorn; and the 'ugly' as not meriting notice or serious appraisal.

⁵⁵ These topics are addressed more fully in my forthcoming monographs *The Sensual Book, 500–1500* and *Beauty and the Book: From Arts and Crafts to Modernism, 1891–1940*.

EDITORIAL CERTAINTY AND THE EDITOR'S CHOICE

Tim William Machan

Modesty, uncertainty, and indecision have not, typically, characterized textual criticism and editorial scholarship. Fredson Bowers, one of the foremost American textual scholars of the twentieth century, in fact once began an article by categorically stating: 'The attempt to determine what the author wrote defines textual criticism.'¹ In his conviction if not his argument, Bowers shared the attitudes of the early twentieth-century classicist and poet A. E. Housman, who observed not only that 'This planet is largely inhabited by parrots, and it is easy to disguise folly by giving it a fine name', but also that 'A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas'.² For his part, Housman, who had nearly nothing nice to say about his eighteenth-century predecessor Richard Bentley,³ would certainly have agreed with Bentley's conviction that to him, reason and reality were preferable to a hundred manuscripts.⁴ And for their part, medievalists have shown no more reticence or diffidence than their modernist counterparts. E. Talbot Donaldson devotes his justly famous paper on the psychology of

I am grateful to the Marquette University Committee on Research for a grant that enabled me to study the manuscripts discussed here.

¹ Bowers, 'Multiple Authority: New Problems and Concepts of Copy-Text', *The Library*, 5th series, 27 (1972), 81–115 (p. 81).

² Housman, *Selected Prose*, ed. by John Carter (Cambridge, 1961), pp. 37 and 132, respectively.

³ Housman once observed of Bentley, 'There is a sort of savage nobility about his firm reliance on his own bad taste' (*Selected Prose*, p. 14).

⁴ 'Nobis et ratio et res ipsa centum codicibus potiores sunt', quoted in C. O. Brink, *English Classical Scholarship: Historical Reflections on Bentley, Porson and Housman* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 71.

editors to a witty and rigorous critique of editors who attempt to situate their editorial decisions in the putatively objective facts of readings and their transmission rather than to take responsibility for the role played by their own creative thinking — or lack of it.⁵ And George Kane joins Donaldson in throwing down their equally famous gauntlet at the end of the introduction to their edition of Langland's B-version of *Piers Plowman*: 'How we have interpreted that [material] evidence, and the evidence of the A and C versions bearing on it, has been laid wholly open to scrutiny in the preceding pages of this Introduction. Whether we have carried out our task efficiently must be assessed by reenacting it.'⁶

These are not, as I say, the words of shy, retiring men who brook doubt, provisional conclusions, or alternatives. And yet for all the editors' certainty, choice remains not merely a possibility in how we approach literary works; it is the pre-eminent factor. Readers always have choice, whether about what works to read, what editions in which to read them, and why to read them at all. If we modern readers wish to read a work of recent fiction, for example, we might choose to do so in any number of paperback or cloth editions, each available at a different price and in a design reflecting different production concerns. An inexpensive paperback of Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby* would have a correspondingly unambitious design in the size of its pages and type font and in its exclusion of explanatory material. A scholarly paperback edition, such as one for Penguin, would be priced higher and would include an introduction, explanatory notes, textual variants, and perhaps even the illustrations that 'Phiz' produced for the novel's original production. A hardback copy in a collected works might have all this, as well as additional illustrations, a marking-ribbon, and, of course, the durability of a cloth binding; its cost would rise proportionately. For novels like *Nicholas Nickleby* — and even more so for more recent books like Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* or Toni Morrison's *Beloved* — the text has remained relatively stable in transmission, and so there would likely be only small differences among the wording and punctuation in any of the available editions. The reader's choice, then, would depend on price, convenience, or personal preference; in the case of a library book, simple availability might be the determining factor.

More significantly, whatever edition a reader chooses, and for whatever reason, this choice will have consequences for how the reader comes to view the work.

⁵ Donaldson, 'The Psychology of Editors of Middle English Texts', in his *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York, 1970), pp. 102–18.

⁶ *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. by George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, rev. edn (London, 1988), p. 220.

While a paperback edition conveys the casualness and ephemerality of a modern popular writer, an expensive cloth edition imputes seriousness of purpose and literary achievement, even before a reader opens the book and even if in each case the text — the words and punctuation — is identical. It has become axiomatic in textual criticism, indeed, that the physical documents in which we read texts have a profound, if sometimes also elusive, impact on our sense of a literary work. Whether they are manuscripts or printed books, that is, documents both reflect a particular status for a literary work and invite particular responses to it. In this sense, not only might one say that modern novels have many forms and meanings but also that readers' choices play a significant part in their construction.

Modern readers of medieval works have choices, too, though they are choices of a different order, both from those faced by novel-readers and from those faced by the works' original medieval compilers and readers. They are choices that point, in fact, to the presence of some of the most distinctive qualities of medieval English literature alongside some of the qualities it shares with literature of the modern period. Since medieval works have existed longer across time — from their period of composition, through the earliest printed editions, through nineteenth-century editions produced in part as aids to historical linguistics, to modern, scholarly ones — perhaps the first choice is where to begin reading. The original materials are often out of consideration, for libraries do not lend them, and students and scholars have access to them only in situ and only with special permission. Microfilm or recent on-line and CD versions can provide greater virtual access to original materials, though this access is still restricted — electronic readers or computers are necessary — and offers a sometimes awkward reading experience: I can't imagine anyone who would want to curl up with a good laptop and CD copy of *Piers Plowman*. Printed editions complicate choice in still other ways. Expense and availability are significant factors here, since the paperback *Riverside Chaucer*, for instance, can cost four times as much as an edition like A. C. Cawley's *Canterbury Tales*.

As with modern novels, readers' choices of format for a medieval English work contribute significantly to their sense of that work. While readers might choose Cawley's *Canterbury Tales* simply out of cost and convenience, the poem they will read is considerably more coherent and polished than what appears in any manuscript. Of the roughly eighty extant manuscripts of the *Tales*, an editor like Cawley will of course follow the one whose lines of verse, contents, and tale arrangement render the pilgrimage (in his opinion) the most comprehensible. Editors likewise influence readers' experiences of the *Canterbury Tales* through decisions about which linguistic and historical knowledge to assume and what passages to clarify in the notes and glossary. By identifying passages as problematic or by eliding

scholarly concerns about them, editors can open up or restrict the interpretive choices a reader might make — about the relation of the *Clerk's Tale* to the *Wife of Bath's Tale* or about the unfinished nature of the *Cook's Tale*, for example. Similarly, readers choosing early modern editions, such as Thomas Speght's 1598 and 1602 editions of Chaucer's complete *Works*, necessarily understand Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales* within the context of those editions' editorial choices. As part of an additive editorial process begun with William Thynne's first collected edition of Chaucer's *Works* (1532), Speght's editions not only retain spurious pieces of the received tradition — such as Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* and Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* — but extend this tradition with additional poems and with a variety of supplementary materials: a life of Chaucer, interpretive notes, and several glossaries. Seen from the perspective of the Reformation, Chaucer's poetry means something considerably different from what it does in a flawed medieval manuscript or a polished modern edition. To choose these early modern editions is to read a prolific poet who is part courtier, part religious reformer, and part monument in the developing traditions of English literature.⁷

Medieval scribes and compilers faced choices about cost and design as well. And I here emphasize scribes and compilers rather than authors precisely because, with some notable exceptions to be considered shortly, authors participated comparatively little in whether and how their compositions circulated. The choices of book-producers were themselves influenced by the choices of book-buyers, since until well into the fifteenth century, buyers had a significant say about the form of manuscripts of English poetry. Given the time and cost of production, that is, medieval vernacular English manuscripts were generally not produced on speculation, as is the case with modern novels, but bespoke — ordered ahead of time, with their buyers' specifications (potentially) as to their contents, arrangement, page size, format, script, illuminations, and so forth. Since, through the process of *compilatio*, manuscripts typically were compiled from booklets, they also had a fundamentally open quality (again, unlike contemporary novels). Barring lavishly designed books with fixed, board covers — a rarity for vernacular English productions — manuscripts could always have their parts rearranged, abridged, or supplemented. Consequently, any of their medieval users, whether those who originally ordered and compiled the manuscripts or those into whose possession they subsequently came, again had opportunities to alter the contents of what they read. This, too, is a level of choice categorically different from readers' choices today; present-

⁷ See further Machan, 'Speght's *Works* and the Invention of Chaucer', *Text*, 8 (1995), 145–70.

day readers might well alter their own books in any number of ways, but such editing is not incorporated into subsequent printings of the books. It is the kind and consequence of choices like these in medieval manuscript culture — and the qualifications they force on editorial certitude — that I now want to explore in detail.⁸

Of the choices available to medieval book-producers for the manuscript presentation of a work, the one most familiar to modern readers is the shaping of a book through the hands-on involvement of an individual writer. This is familiar because, at least since the Romantic movement, readers have taken for granted a firm identification of author with work. We expect the author's name on the spine of a book, and we locate books alphabetically by author. One medieval manuscript that enacts this very authorizing principle is London, British Library, MS Additional 36704, a mid-fifteenth-century manuscript containing lives of Saints Augustine and Gilbert followed by a brief treatise on the Augustinian order. The first two works were translated out of Latin into English by John Capgrave, while the third, according to a rubric, was 'drawe oute of a sermoun seyde be frer Ion capgrau at cambrige'. Additionally, the entire manuscript was copied by Capgrave himself, making MS Add. 36704 a tour de force of authorial involvement in medieval book production.

The author as authorizing principle also underwrites manuscripts of John Gower's works, though in a considerably more limited fashion. While no manuscripts of his Latin, French, or English poems survive in his hand, manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* display a great deal of regularity in design, including the placement of illuminations, the presentation of glosses, flourishes at the beginning of individual books, and the number of lines of text per page. Textually, this regularity extends to the stability of the poem and even its spelling in transmission. The lavish appearance of *Confessio* manuscripts is thus mirrored in unusually close attention to the words of the poet, and partially for this reason, there seems in general to have been a high degree of professional involvement in *Confessio* manuscripts, with some scribes apparently specializing in copying the poem.⁹ Altogether, such regularity points to the guiding hand of a coterie carrying out Gower's design, if not to Gower himself, in a transmission history that both reflects and invites Gower's prestige.

⁸ Useful discussions of medieval manuscript culture can be found in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. by Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989), and Ralph Hanna III, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Stanford, 1996).

⁹ Derek Pearsall, 'The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 73–97.

A similar example of the way documentary context can focus on specific authors and manufacture their literary status is London, British Library, MS Additional 59495, known as the Trentham manuscript and containing copies of Gower's poems in each of the three languages in which he wrote. Although a small quarto of only forty-one leaves, MS Add. 59495 pays significant attention to the presentation of the poems in the form of large, coloured capitals at the beginnings of each, the numbering of French balades, and a general uniformity of design. While Gower does not appear to have been involved in its construction, MS Add. 59495 recalls *Confessio* manuscripts in that it was clearly designed as a deluxe whole, one whose text was written out with care. In fact, this manuscript was presented to King Henry IV as an assemblage of works by John Gower, whose name appears on several occasions, such as at the conclusion of the balades: 'Explicunt carmina Johannis Gower que Gallice composita Balades dicuntur.'¹⁰ In this way, again like *Confessio* manuscripts, MS Add. 59495 invites and even requires that its readers approach its contents as the works of an important writer.

Chaucer's works likewise sometimes appeared in lavish formats that emphasized his status as a writer. Manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* in particular often lend the poem and its author special authority in their elaborate openings for individual tales, wide margins, and decorative penwork. Most famously, San Marino, Huntington Library, MS Ellesmere 26 C 9 (the Ellesmere manuscript) includes full-colour portraits of each pilgrim, based partly on the descriptions in the *General Prologue*, beside the beginning of his or her tale. A further reflection of the way manuscripts can effect literary significance is the fact that the programme of illustrating tales with portraits of its narrators is not unique to Ellesmere. A different (and simpler) set of illustrations appears in CUL, MS Gg.4.27, while in London, British Library, MS Egerton 2863 the first leaf of nearly every tale has been excised, very likely because those leaves, too, contained illuminations if not portraits. Such independent creation of similar programmes of deluxe presentation point to and facilitated the spread of Chaucer's reputation in the early fifteenth century.

A few other writers, ones who are now considerably less popular than Chaucer or even Gower, could also serve as authorizing principles for their works in manuscripts whose presentations connoted similar high status and achievement. One of these is Thomas Hoccleve, whose *Regiment of Princes* appears in several lavish copies. London, British Library, MS Sloane 1825, for example, is a well-produced quarto whose opening page is entirely framed with an acanthus border and whose

¹⁰ 'Here end the songs of John Gower, which are composed in French and called Balades.'

initial letter (**M** in 'Musynge') is painted blue and gold. Alternating red and blue paraps begin each stanza, and red glosses occur within the column of text, breaking it up into smaller, readable sections. Even more lavish is London, British Library, MS Arundel 38, which was probably the very copy presented to the future King Henry V; it includes illuminated borders, paragraphing, rubrication, incidental illumination, and a three-quarter page picture of, presumably, a kneeling, red-robed Hoccleve presenting a book — *this* book — to a standing, blue-robed and crowned Henry. As visually striking as this presentation picture is, it makes the point that in medieval manuscripts, features of design could also foster or even make critical commentary. In this case the illustration self-referentially depicts the poet handing over the very poem that readers hold in their hands and thereby images the interactive ways in which authors, texts, and audiences construct literary meaning.

London, British Library, MS Additional 27944, containing John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's thirteenth-century encyclopaedia *De proprietatibus rerum*, presents a similar example. This book opens with a six-page table of contents, the initial page framed with acanthus and the book titles coloured blue or red with gold leaf, the chapter titles black, and the chapter numbers red. Given the size of the volume — over three hundred leaves in a large quarto design — the table (whose lavishness is echoed throughout the volume) is a device both aesthetic and practical, pleasing to look at and useful for arranging one's reading strategy. Similar combinations of the aesthetic and the practical characterize manuscripts of Lydgate's long works. Thus, the copy of *The Fall of Princes* in London, British Library, MS Additional 39659 utilizes large blue capitals with red penwork to mark the beginnings of individual stories, even larger capitals with penwork to begin individual books, and red rubrics to demarcate the transitions from one book to another. A programme of detailed and hierarchical illuminations likewise foregrounds the structure of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* in London, British Library, MS Arundel 119, which also commences the tale proper with an initial **S** (in 'Sithen') that is historiated with a royal figure, perhaps William de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk, for whom the manuscript was written. Still more elaborate (and reader-friendly) is the *Troy Book* found in London, British Library, MS Arundel 99. Here, sense and prestige emerge simultaneously from the full-page acanthus borders that begin each book and the coloured paraps, enlarged capitals, rubricated headings and glosses, penwork flourishes, and multicoloured ink that occur throughout the volume.

In their construction and the effects they have on a reader's reception of a work, such deluxe productions might well justify Bowers's definition of textual criticism.

But manuscripts like these represent only one medieval choice, and it was not in fact an especially common one for those producing manuscripts of vernacular writers. More typically, when medieval English writers provided the organizational motive for a manuscript, their involvement was less direct and the status that their manuscripts evoked more restrained. London, British Library, MS Harley 2255, for instance, utilizes the author as organizing principle by bringing together forty-five of Lydgate's religious poems in a format that is considerably understated in comparison to the manuscripts I have just considered. While it has wide margins, decorated capitals, and the red underscoring of important names and keywords, MS Harley 2255 lacks full-page portraits and illustrations. Whatever prestige it conveys to Lydgate derives primarily from its identification of his authorship for many of the poems, whether by title, colophon ('Explicit quod Lydgate'), or both. Simpler still is London, British Library, MS Harley 682, a small quarto devoted to English translations of the love poems of Charles d'Orleans. Here, the manuscript perhaps promises more than could be delivered, for while it has a uniform hand, wide margins, and a generally handsome presentation, it lacks colophons for individual poems, and the three-line capitals that were meant to begin each poem were never added; blank half-pages at the beginning of poems suggest that illustrations may have been intended but were likewise never completed. The result is an unfinished book whose author appears far less consequential than Gower and even Lydgate.

Even these kinds of author-centred collections are unusual among late medieval English manuscripts, however.¹¹ Some of the reasons for this situation lie in the process of manuscript transmission, for publication essentially meant simply making a text available for others to copy. Sometimes this copying took place far outside the original writer's purview, and the mechanics of this process allowed for continual reconfiguration of texts and the documents that contained them. And other reasons emerge from late medieval culture and its emphasis on Latin as the language of exegesis, ecclesiastical and civil practice, and authorship.¹² Within this context, vernacular writers in general could ill serve as authorizing principles in the organization of individual manuscripts.

¹¹ A. S. G. Edwards, 'Fifteenth-Century Middle English Verse Author Collections', in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. by Edwards, Vincent Gillespie, and Ralph Hanna (London, 2000), pp. 101–12, and Ardis Butterfield, 'Articulating the Author: Gower and the French Vernacular Codex', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 33 (2003), 80–96.

¹² See A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Aldershot, 1988), and Tim William Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville, 1994).

A more frequent choice for manuscript production, then, was to organize a book around individual works, whether or not their authors were known. This means that long works like *Piers Plowman* characteristically appeared in manuscripts by themselves. Like other kinds of manuscripts, such single-work productions both invited and conditioned readers' responses, conveying certain qualities to the work they contained and, in turn, eliciting commensurate expectations. If the luxuriousness of *Confessio* manuscripts, for instance, presents Gower as a great author and the poem as an achievement worthy of respect and contemplation, the simplicity of *Piers Plowman* manuscripts reflects the poem's more marginal status as a work of social criticism. London, British Library, MS Additional 34779 thus offers Langland's poem in a largely unbroken column, written nearly margin to margin and highlighted only with three-line blue capitals at the beginning of each passus. Since this largely unadorned format appears throughout the poem's manuscript transmission, *Piers Plowman* manuscripts not only display consistency in presentation but also consistently allot the poem only limited visual prestige. Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Life of Christ* and of Richard Rolle's *Psalter*, too, project only limited prestige for their authors with similar consistency. For these works, the pervasive patterns of design imply that some kind of standardization had taken place early in the transmission histories. In manuscripts of Rolle's *Psalter*, for example (such as London, British Library, MSS Arundel 158 and Harley 1806), a line of Latin is regularly followed by a line of translation and then commentary. But like many *Piers* manuscripts, London, British Library, MS Additional 30031, containing a copy of the *Mirror of the Life of Christ*, employs only underscoring, paragraph marks, and coloured capitals by way of illuminations. London, British Library, MS Additional 10340 offers Chaucer's *Boece* in a similarly clear and careful format, without illuminations and with moderate rubrication and paragraph marking, thus conveying a similarly unassuming status to the translation.

Chaucer, in fact, encapsulates just how different the choices of medieval reading and book-production can be from their modern counterparts. He may be the writer whose medieval status seems to approximate most closely his modern one — the one whom Bowers would find most familiar — and the Ellesmere manuscript may be the best-known vernacular English manuscript of all. But whether a manuscript is organized around Chaucer as a presumptive author (as in the Ellesmere manuscript) or around an individual work (as in MS Add. 10340, containing the *Boece*), many peculiarities of manuscript culture prevail in copies of Chaucer's poems. For most modern readers, the *Canterbury Tales* are relatively fixed in their contents, their order, and their readings at any given line. Enforced by comprehensive critical readings of Chaucer's artistry or politics and especially by classrooms, where students are likely to use the same edition, this impression nevertheless runs

contrary to manuscript evidence in several ways.¹³ Above all, manuscript culture allowed readers and copyists the choice of editing individual lines and works, and manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* in fact differ significantly in the tales they contain, the sequence in which they are contained, and the structure of individual tales. London, British Library, MS Sloane 1686, for instance, places the *Physician's Tale* after the *Second Nun's Tale* and not the *Franklin's Tale*, as is the case in the *Riverside Chaucer* and most modern editions. Like MS Egerton 2863, MS Sloane 1686 likewise supplements the fragmentary *Cook's Tale* with the non-Chaucerian *Tale of Gamelyn*, a roughly written romance about inheritance and dispossession. In MS Sloane 1686 the *Tale of Gamelyn* is prefaced by a rubric ('The tale of Gamelyn tolde be the Cooke') that gives the poem the same status as any other tale in the *Canterbury* sequence, while in MS Egerton 2863 the scribe effects the transition from the *Cook's Tale* to the *Tale of Gamelyn* through a spurious couplet on fol. 37^r that seems to have the authenticity of a pilgrim narrator's voice:

But hereof I wil passe as now
And of yonge Gamelyn I wil telle yow.

A more fastidious response to the difficulties caused by the fragmentary 'Cook's Tale' occurs in London, British Library, MS Egerton 2864. Like the well-known Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Hengwrt 154 (the Hengwrt manuscript), MS Egerton 2864 takes at face value that Chaucer himself never completed the fourth of the *Canterbury Tales*, for after recording as much of the *Cook's Tale* as exists, the scribe adds 'Chawcer maad no moor of the cookis tale'.

But if in this way MS Egerton 2864 recalls the emphasis modern editions place on offering only authentically Chaucerian texts, in other ways it does not. Readers used to the fourfold division of the *Knight's Tale* will be surprised to find that large capitals mark, besides these divisions, parallel divisions at 'The statue of Venus' (line 1955), 'Yn thilke frosty cold' (line 1973), and elsewhere. In the same vein, London, British Library, MS Additional 35286 inserts unfamiliar rubrics into the column of text in the *Pardoner's Tale*, where they announce 'Of hasardry', 'Of swerynge', and 'Of Riatours'. As minor as they might be, these kinds of rearrangements underscore the fact that manuscript culture had a far more fluid notion of textuality and authorial texts than does the modern era, wherein no publisher or editor would think to alter, without permission, the words or chapter order of a novel. And for subsequent readers who might have access only to these manuscripts, again, their texts were necessarily Chaucerian. In fact, however much he has

¹³ See *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400–1602*, ed. by Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus, 1999).

been monumentalized by modern critical editions and the certitude of their editors, Chaucer himself subscribed to this same notion of textual fluidity. While his poem 'Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn', in which he lambasts a scribe for the copying errors he makes, seems to advance a modern notion of textual authority, his methods of composition could be more flexible. In Book 5 of *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, when Troilus visits his sister Cassandra for an interpretation of his dream about Criseyde lying in the embrace of a boar, editions like the *Riverside Chaucer* insert in small type within a footnote a passage from Statius's Latin *Thebaid*, which offers that poem's general argument. Almost all manuscripts of the *Troilus*, however, place the Latin extract directly within the column of text after Book 5, line 1498, even breaking it up into stanzas like the English, as in London, British Library, MS Additional 12044. In this way, the *Troilus*, presumably by Chaucer's own design, concludes multilingually and multi-authorially as well as multivocally, offering differing views in differing languages on the significance of Troilus's 'double sorwe'.

In view of the textual fluidity that medieval manuscript culture fostered, authorial revision and scribal alteration can sometimes merge in provocative ways, as happens with *Piers Plowman*. Early in the poem, after Holy Church informs the Dreamer that truth is the best of all treasures, he asks her how truth might come into his life:

'I haue no kynde knowyng: yut mot ye kene me betre
By wat craft in my cors hyt comseth, ant were.'

According to some manuscripts, he adds another '3et' and asks her:

'3et haue I no kynde knowyng', quap I, '3et mote 3e kenne me bettre
Be what craft in my cors it compsiþ, and where.'

Or, according to other manuscripts, he uses largely these words but in a slightly different orthography:

'Yet haue I no kynde knowynge', quod I, 'yet mote ye kenne me bettre
By what craft in my cors it comseþ, and where.'

Or finally, according to still other manuscripts, he makes essentially the same point through another phrasing:

'I haue no kynde knowyng', quod Y, '3ut mot 3e kenne me bettere
By what wey it wexeth and wheder out of my menynges'.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A. V. C. Schmidt (London, 1995), pp. 42–43.

In every instance, Holy Church responds by calling the Dreamer a 'doted daffe', a reproach that many a reader, in turn, might want to direct at the poet for having 'no kynde knowyng' of his own about what he wanted to say here. As different as each of these passages may be, they all in fact stake a claim to be the same extract from *Piers Plowman*. This is possible because, according to received scholarly opinion, Langland revised the poem at least twice after completing his first version. The revisions in this passage may seem fairly minor, but this is not the case throughout Langland's long and difficult poem, for which versions differ not only in lines and passages but also in the inclusion of entire sections; the versions conventionally labelled B and C, for example, are roughly twice as long as the ones labelled Z and A. While some of these variations may be owing to Langland's revisions, others may result from the vagaries of manuscript transmission, including both simple error and the intentional alterations of late medieval readers, for whom the poem's provocative commentary on the church and crown seems to have invoked direct textual intervention. Such intervention is not always easily distinguished from Langland's own revisions; the first passage above, indeed, is regarded by many scholars as no more than the result of scribal alterations of the other versions. This intervention thereby throws into sharp relief the relations among literary meaning, manuscript context, and reader's response. To be sure, medieval readers might have had access to multiple copies of a work, but more typically they seem to have had only one manuscript before them. And for such readers, that manuscript was *Piers Plowman*, whether the individual readings were Langland's, inadvertent corruptions of what Langland had written, or the deliberate fabrication of a copyist. Just as significantly, for reasons like this the very distinction between authorial and non-authorial works is one that many medieval readers would not have recognized.¹⁵ In such circumstances, the glib challenge to replicate a textual-critical process in order to arrive at one's own editorial certainty only serves to obscure not only the interpretive implications of any one medieval book-producer's choices, but also the very existence of medieval choice, as well as the alternatives and doubts that choice mandates for textual critics.

At this point, I want to draw several provisional conclusions about the role of choice in the production and generation of meaning for medieval English literature. First, while individual readers' views of a given work would likely be limited to whatever manuscript of that work they had before them, in the aggregate,

¹⁵ See C. David Benson, *Public Piers Plowman: Modern Scholarship and Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park, 2004).

medieval readers truly did have a wide array of choice over what to read and the format in which to read it. Second, through these varying formats not only did different works appear in sometimes profoundly different ways, but any one work might itself appear in formats varying from the casual to the lavish. Third, these formats, while partly acts of aesthetic design, had significant consequences for how a reader approached a particular work and, in turn, for the meanings of the work and the status that accrued to it. And fourth, the medieval taste that these formats reflect sometimes diverges considerably from modern taste. We may generally regard Chaucer as the pre-eminent late medieval poet, and the presentation of the *Canterbury Tales* in some late medieval manuscripts does much to justify this view. But Gower, Lydgate, and Hoccleve, now considerably less popular, could be presented with just as much panache and prestige, as could Bartholomaeus Anglicus, whose works are now read only by specialists. At the end of the Middle Ages, indeed, it wasn't Chaucer alone, but Chaucer alongside Lydgate and Gower who defined the pantheon of English poetry. To George Ashby, in his fifteenth-century *Active Polity of a Prince*, these three authors together were models of poetic language and style:

Primier poetes of this nacion,
Embelysshing oure englishe tendure algate,
Firste finders to oure consolacion
Off fresshe, douce englishe and formacion
Of new balades, not vsed before,
By whome we all may haue lernyng and lore.¹⁶

A choice modern readers face, then, is whether to read as a modern person (motivated by any number of critical approaches), as an early modern person (who might value Lydgate as much as Chaucer), or as a medieval person (who might have access only to what we would consider very inaccurate texts). In every case, no matter what format in which a reader chooses to read a work, that format will have consequences for the understanding of the work.

Miscellanies, or books composed of various works, can be mentioned in this context. While modern readers tend to approach poems like *Sir Orfeo* in isolation, medieval readers would often have encountered them as parts of a larger manuscript — one like Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck manuscript). Produced in London in the 1330s and perhaps known by Chaucer, this book of over three hundred leaves gathers together a wide

¹⁶ George Ashby's *Poems*, ed. by Mary Bateson, EETS c.s., 76 (London, 1899), lines 2–7, p. 13.

variety of poems by different authors, concentrating on romances, such as *Sir Orfeo* and *Floris and Blancheflour*. It thus testifies to medieval recognition of the romance genre; but also, in its sheer size, it embodies an inchoate sense that English poetry is important and worthy of collection in and of itself. More narrowly, London, British Library, MS Harley 2278, a deluxe and lavishly illustrated volume presented to Henry VI, demonstrates the genre of hagiography, prefacing Lydgate's lives of St Edmund and St Fremund with a few brief religious poems. The far more modest London, British Library, MS Additional 23002, which includes Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, can also be mentioned in this regard. While the *Treatise* now characteristically appears in Chaucer's collected works (where even if unread it substantiates his claim to literary greatness), in MS Add. 23002 it is grouped with other anonymous writers' treatises on astronomy, plants, trees, and natural history into what is, in effect, a manual of scientific writing.

Focused miscellanies, however, are perhaps not as common as those that, while reflecting principles of order, nonetheless display a broad sense of decorum: they may have a rationale, but it is not one familiar to modern readers. The organizing principle of London, British Library, MS Cotton Galba E IX might be described as linguistic, for it assembles the poems of Laurence Minot, *The Pricke of Conscience*, *Ywain and Gawain*, and other works that have little in common other than the fact that they are written in a northern dialect. Linguistic motivation is also apparent in London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, though here the rationale is more broadly conceived, for MS Harley 2253 contains poems collected not as representations of a dialect but as reflections of medieval England's multilingualism. One of the best-known and most important Middle English miscellanies, MS Harley 2253 offers a trilingual collection of 116 Latin, French, and English romances, lyrics, and translations arranged in thematic groupings.¹⁷ But the eclectic contents of the Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet.a.1) seem to defy categorization. This is an enormous book — whether measured by contents, size, or weight — that contains, by design, a variety of secular and religious pieces, including the *South English Legendary*, works by Richard Rolle, *The Pricke of Conscience*, Walter Hilton's translation of *Stimulus amoris*, the romance *King Robert of Sicily*, *Piers Plowman*, and various religious lyrics. A subtitle more specific than the Bodleian catalogue's 'Poems and prose treatises in Middle English and Anglo-Norman' would be difficult to produce. Even more apparently eclectic is London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A II, which incorporates several

¹⁷ Theo Stemmler, 'Miscellany or Anthology? The Structure of Medieval Manuscripts: MS Harley 2253, for Example', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 39 (1991), 231–37.

of Lydgate's short poems, anonymous religious lyrics, and religious romances such as *Susannah* and *Ypotis*, but also the secular romances *Sir Launfal* and *Octavian*.

Given the fact that manuscripts were fundamentally open productions, always susceptible to editing, abbreviation, and supplement, their contents and arrangements could change over time, in both intentional and accidental fashions. CUL, MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern manuscript) represents one common type of such manuscripts: ones that grew over time through the accretion of many works in many hands and that therefore resist the identification of any ordering principle. In the case of Findern, we have a manuscript that currently consists of 159 paper leaves containing sixty-two items. These sixty-two items were written by thirty different hands — some of them contributing only a few short poems — over the latter half of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth, when the manuscript took shape in the Derbyshire house of the Finderns, a prominent and singularly literate family whose political influence bore on major events of the fifteenth century, from the ascendancy of Henry IV, to the Lollard controversy, to the Wars of the Roses.¹⁸ Another common type is a manuscript that is the work of a particular copyist. The organization of such manuscripts is necessarily individualistic, reflecting the tastes of its compiler and the availability of desirable texts. A compilation of this sort is London, British Library, MS Additional 31042, one of two extant manuscripts in the hand of the fifteenth-century Yorkshireman Robert Thornton. His individualistic taste is instructive, for by placing side by side works that we would distinguish as either secular (such as *Wynnere and Wastoure*) or religious (such as *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*), Thornton points to medieval notions of literature in which this distinction seems open to question. Another compilation with similar implications is London, British Library, MS Additional 16165, one of several manuscripts from the hand of the fifteenth-century bibliophile John Shirley. This combines Chaucer's *Boece* with Trevisa's translation of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* (among other works) in a tour de force production that expresses Shirley's conviction that English writings had a pre-eminently ethical utility, irrespective of genre or author.

Before concluding, I want briefly to consider one other way in which the open-ended character of manuscripts was expressed, together with the choices of their producers and users. Since manuscripts were the results of human labour and existed across time, they might also take shape through accident and disfigurement.

¹⁸ See further Maureen Jurkowski, 'The "Findern Manuscript" and the History of the Findern Family in the Fifteenth Century', in *Texts and their Contexts: Papers from the Early Book Society*, ed. by John Scattergood and Julia Boffey (Dublin, 1997), pp. 196–222.

As lavish and as carefully designed as MS Arundel 38 was, for example, this presentation copy of Hoccleve's *Regiment* was still subject to copying errors, as on fol. 65^r, when the scribe omitted a whole stanza. While a modern book might be printed with a missing page or line or might include an errata page, this scribe noticed his mistake and added the stanza in the lower portion of the right margin. He drew a rope around it, and put the rope in the hands of a figure beneath the column of text, into which, his feet dug in the ground and nearly supine, the figure yanks the errant stanza. Less whimsically, someone in the manuscript's history excised a leaf after fol. 90 on which, presumably, was featured a copy of the famous portrait of Chaucer pointing at lines that refer to him.¹⁹

Such wilful damage as this can have an ideological edge to it, as in London, British Library, MS Additional 11565, a huge quarto containing a copy of the *Golden Legend*. This is a handsomely produced volume throughout, but when the narrative gets to the life of St Thomas Becket on fol. 45^v, the rubric introducing the legend is crossed out, as is the entire column on which the legend begins. At least one subsequent folio has been excised, and when the manuscript resumes it is with the life of St Dunstan. The figure whose murder in the cathedral at Canterbury motivated so many medieval pilgrimages is thereby erased from pre-Protestant history. Similar Reformation motives apparently exercised a reader of the *Confessio Amantis* in London, British Library, MS Royal 18.C.xxii. As a *Confessio* manuscript this is, unsurprisingly, a lavish book, as valuable for its appearance as for its contents. And yet some early modern reader took the trouble to scratch out nearly every occurrence of the word *pope* — though often so ineffectively as to leave the word clearly visible beneath erasure — including, in a story about Pope Boniface VIII, twelve instances on fol. 47^r alone.

To finish with a happier instance of the contingency and unpredictability of choice in manuscript transmission, I cite London, British Library, MS Additional 18632. By original design, this large quarto contained both Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* and Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* and thus might be regarded as a fifteenth-century witness to Chaucer's influence. This tribute took on added significance when, at some point in the manuscript's history, two leaves from the household accounts of Elizabeth de Burgh, countess of Ulster and wife of Prince Lionel of England, were added — one at the front and one at the back of the book. These leaves are important because they contain the earliest references to Geoffrey

¹⁹ The portrait can still be seen in London, British Library, MS Harley 4866. For a reproduction and discussion, see Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 288–90.

Chaucer, then a young page in Elizabeth's house and someone who, according to these notices, was entitled to funds to buy clothing.²⁰ Whether by whimsy, chance, or design, the choices and contingencies of manuscript culture here yield a book that emblemizes, with an almost New Historicist twist, the fashioning of Chaucer into the putative father of English poetry. A literary tradition that rendered Chaucer an originary if absent figure coalesces with the material culture of courts and documents, together constructing England's pre-eminent medieval poet.

All readers take comfort in the notion that the words they are reading are the words an author wrote, and that the processes by which those words reached the page in front of them are reliable and can be accepted on faith. They take comfort in the belief that the texts they read, and from which they write literary history, emerge from the only correct responses to clear-cut choices. In editing, this notion has been sustained historically by the sense that new textual-critical methods replace old ones, so that the editions of the present obviate those of the past. Readers can thus be left with the impression that *The Riverside Chaucer* replaces Skeat's *Complete Works* of Chaucer, which replaced Tyrwhitt's *Canterbury Tales*, which replaced Speght's *Works*, which replaced Thynne's, which replaced the manuscript traditions.²¹ And yet as this same tradition of editing shows, editorial choices themselves are inevitably provisional, being rooted in a particular historical moment's conception of text production, in that moment's conception of its literary past, and in the constituent impulses and practices of that past. And this provisionality involves not merely isolated readings but theoretical frameworks — and their practical realizations — for what a particular literary work is. Put another way, editors may require accuracy and certainty in order to choose among competing readings in a transmission history, but it is my argument that medieval literary remains give little reason to obscure, much less to erase, the existence of additional choices by extending this certainty to one general kind of edition, one specific edition, or one editorial method over another.

Above all, the conclusion I would draw from the examples discussed here is that the aim of editing a medieval English work should not be limited to identifying what the author wrote, nor should it be regarded as testimony to an editor's intelligence and psychology, nor should it be equated with the readings of a particular manuscript. Editing in general should not be limited to only one approach. All

²⁰ Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, *Chaucer Life-Records* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 13–15.

²¹ For valuable discussions of the history of editing Middle English works, see Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text* (Cambridge, 1996), and David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765–1910* (Minneapolis, 1999).

such exclusive paradigms project the product of an edition onto the process by which works have been remade by authors, scribes, and readers. They occlude textual and documentary variation beneath an editorial framework and thereby shut down the choices readily apparent in medieval manuscript culture. Editorial choice, I suggest, should reflect these very choices — whether to shape a book through an enhanced sense of its author, or the nature of an individual work, or the preferences an individual reader might have about a book's contents or particular readings, or even any error and abuse that might exist in a manuscript whether or not its medieval readers were aware of it. These choices both reflected and determined the diurnal existence of medieval English literature, for those who read it as well as those who wrote it, and they are thus integral characteristics of what makes a medieval romance (say) a medieval romance and not a modern novel. And each of these choices affects not only editorial method but also a reader's response. These days, a quarter century past Jerome McGann's and Donald McKenzie's pioneering work on the sociology of texts, critical works often begin with what is in effect a token acknowledgment of medieval textual choice and variation.²² They then proceed to discussions that everywhere rest on the assumption of a stable author who produced stable texts. This can be the case even with criticism that avowedly situates itself in the margins of medieval culture, since these margins have to be predicated on a stable centre inhabited by someone like a stable Chaucer in order to enable the deconstruction of a distinction between centre and periphery.²³ A literary history that truly embraced the variability of manuscript culture would differ considerably from one that clings only to the stability of vernacular authorship and uses it to underwrite discussions of politics, religion, and art. And a textual criticism developed for this literary history would not be one in which *anything* goes, but one in which *many* things do: facsimile editions, editions of single works, modern-spelling editions, editions of individual writers, editions of individual manuscripts, ideal-text editions, and so forth. And this would be the case in representing both the aggregate of medieval English compositions and also any one particular composition, for which multiple editions reflecting multiple editorial frameworks might be appropriate.

By making the choices they did, medieval book-producers responded to the cultural and practical determinants of manuscript culture and left their collective

²² The landmark studies I have in mind are McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago, 1983), and McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London, 1986).

²³ See for example *Reading from the Margins: Textual Studies, Chaucer, and Medieval Literature*, ed. by Seth Lerer (San Marino, 1996).

readers, in turn, with open-ended choices not simply about what to read, but also about what the nature of a given work might be. *Piers Plowman* might be any of several different versions, the *Canterbury Tales* might embody any of several different orders, and a particular poem might be anything from a page-filler, to an item in an eclectic miscellany, to an integral part of a deluxe presentation copy. In every instance, the text of a medieval poem, even if its spelling and punctuation remain constant, takes on different qualities, inviting different responses from its readers. This being the case, as I suggested at the outset, modern readers of medieval works do indeed have a great many choices over which stage in the history of those texts they wish to read — manuscripts, early printed editions, scholarly editions, and now hypertext editions like the *Canterbury Tales* Project or the *Piers Plowman* Electronic Archive.²⁴ And depending on those choices, what readers read and how they read it will change in rich and varied ways. The *Canterbury Tales* are not found only and simply in the Ellesmere manuscript, or in Thynne's edition, or in Robinson's, or in the *Riverside Chaucer*; they are found in all these formats, and others, concurrently. While the choices facing readers of medieval English literature may be daunting, they should be embraced and not deferred entirely to editorial certainty, as readers do whenever they take the editions they use as unproblematic and unimpeachable copies of the works they contain, or whenever they accept an editor's rhetoric as validation of particular editorial choices.

²⁴ See <<http://www.canterburytalesproject.org/>> and <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/scenet/piers/>>.

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Plate I. St Luke cross-carpet page and incipit page from the Lindisfarne Gospels, London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D IV, fols 138^v–139^r. Holy Island, c. 710–20. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.



Plate II. Crucifixion miniature from the Durham Gospels. Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A.ii.17, fol. 38^r. Late seventh century. Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter, Durham Cathedral.



Plate III. Sion Treasure book covers. Washington DC, Dumbarton Oaks, inv. no. BZ 1963.36.8. Constantinople, second half of the sixth century.
Reproduced by permission of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.



Plate IV. Fifth-century binding of the Freer Gospels, refurbished in seventh-century Egypt with encaustic wax images of the evangelists and metal lock.
Washington, DC, Freer Gallery of Art, F1906.274 and its covers, F1906.297 and F1906.298. Reproduced by permission of the Freer Gallery of Art.



Plate V. Miniature of St John the Evangelist from the Lindisfarne Gospels.
London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D IV, fol. 209^r. Holy Island, c. 710–20.
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Plate VI. Miniature of St Luke the Evangelist from the Lichfield Gospels. Lichfield Cathedral Library, MS 1, p. 218. Lichfield, Staffordshire, or Holy Island, mid-eighth century?
Reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral.

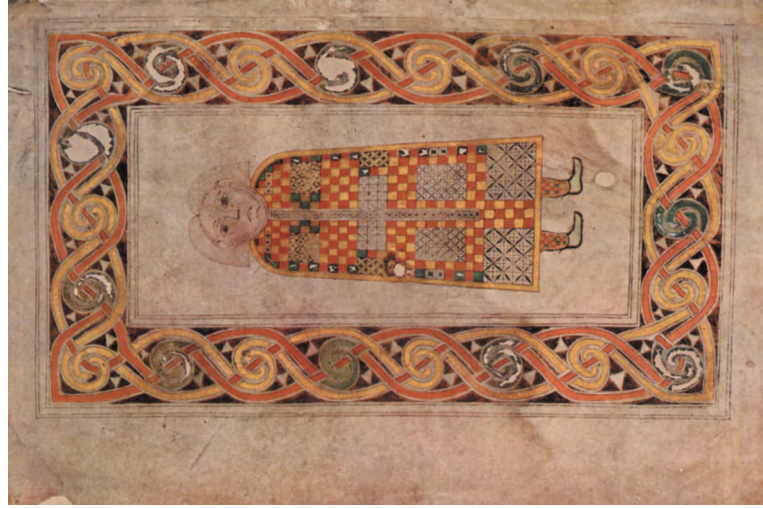


Plate VIIa. Symbol of St Matthew from the Book of Durrow.
 Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 57, fol. 21^v.
 Iona or Ireland, late seventh century.
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Plate VIII. 'Priest's Gospel', Armenia.
 Baltimore, Walters Art Museum MS W.537, fol. 2, AD 966.
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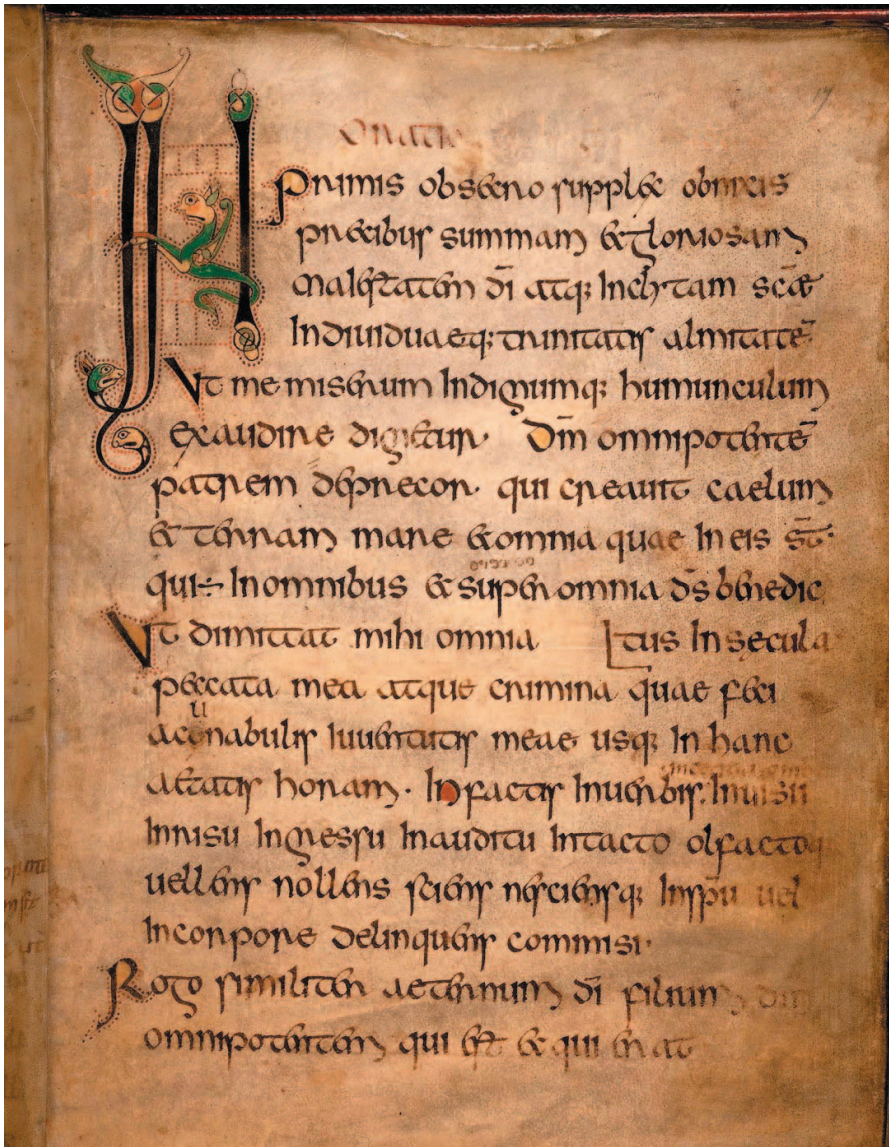


Plate VIII. Royal Prayerbook featuring a senmurv of Persian pedigree.
 London, British Library, MS Royal 2.A.xx, fol. 17r. Western Mercia, early ninth century.
 Reproduced by permission of the British Library.



Plate IXa (above). Polychrome angel sculpture, probably part of a refurbishment of the shrine of St Chad. Lichfield Cathedral, c. 800.

Plate IXb (right). Ivory featuring the Archangel Michael. London, British Museum, E&PA OA 9999. Constantinople, mid-sixth century. Reproduced by permission of the British Museum.

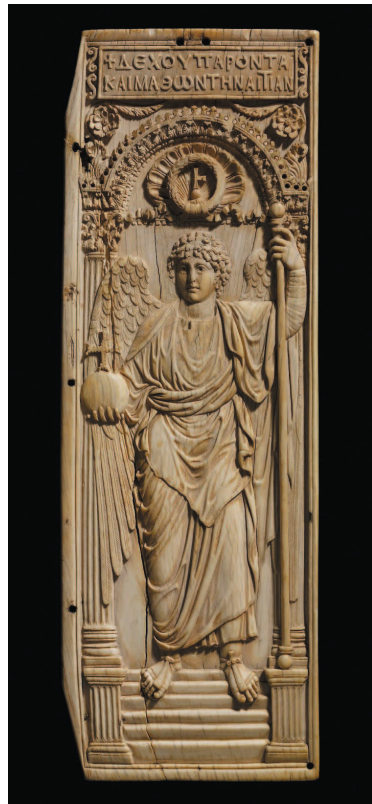




Plate Xa. Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1), fol. 154^v (detail).
Christ Church, Canterbury, third quarter of the twelfth century.
Reproduced by permission of Trinity College, Cambridge.



Plate Xb. Canterbury Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846), fol. 154^v (detail).
Christ Church, Canterbury, end of the twelfth century.
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Plate XIa. Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1), fol. 109^v (detail).
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Plate XIb. Canterbury Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846), fol. 109^v (detail).
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Plate XIIa. Eadwine Psalter (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.17.1), fol. 135^r (detail).
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Plate XIIb. Canterbury Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS lat. 8846), fol. 135^r (detail).
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